

A bit of everything

Humphrey Carpenter

ROBERT MEDLEY
Drawn from the Life
256pp. Faber. £12.50.
0571 130437

Robert Medley was at the heart of the "poetic drama" movement in London during the 1930s, as designer of the Group Theatre productions and companion of Rupert Doone, who directed them. His memoir is offered as a contribution to the understanding of that movement in theatre. Inevitably it is also another contribution to our knowledge of the "Auden Generation".

Born in 1905, the son of a London lawyer and successful City man, Medley was sent by his sensible, liberal, ex-Nonconformist parents to Gresham's, the educational establishment which (as he points out) nurtured at the same period John Hayward, Erskine Childers and Benjamin Britten, not to mention Donald Maclean. Auden was there too, and he and Medley fretted against the notorious "honour system" by which boys were encouraged to report to the authorities on each other's activities with nicotine and sex. But while the already irrepressible Auden cheerfully ignored the whole system and decided he was homosexual, Medley remained confused, pathetically unaware the Auden was in love with him, and puzzled when Auden remarked of a perfect who had cast aspersions on their presence together in a secluded wood, "My dear, obviously he's jealous." Later Medley, by now part of London *demi-monde*, decided he was of the same sexual persuasion, and he went down to Oxford in the hope of making amends with Auden. But though Auden was perfectly prepared to bed down with Medley, the experience was purely clinical.

It was Medley who had suggested to Auden that he might have a go at writing poetry; he was not a poet, but he had a poet's certainty of his vocation. He wanted to be a painter and spent some time drifting between London art schools, experiencing the full gloom of the Royal Academy in the mid-1920s before finding something like a style at the Slade. Even so, his book leaves the impression that, distinguished as he became in the London art world in later years, he never quite shook off uncertainty as to why he was wielding a paintbrush. The illustrations in *Drawn from the Life* reproduce almost nothing of his work.

Medley soon began a rewarding relationship with Reginald Ernest Woodfield, two years his senior, a dancer who had taken the professional name of Rupert Doone. Medley leaves not a shadow of doubt about his loyal affection for his friend, and the most eloquent achievement of *Drawn from the Life* is its unconscious, if rather inexplicit, account of an apparently happy homosexual marriage. Yet in his account of Doone, Medley unwittingly exposes the weakness of the foundations on which the poetic drama movement of the 1930s was built.

Doone (did he adopt the name because he had a passion for Blackmore?) was a working-class boy who felt he did not belong in his Worcestershire home, and set about becoming a dancer, which seemed admirably suited to his Ariel-like physique and movements. He went to Paris (where Medley eventually joined him) and had an affair with Cocteau, worked with Massine, provided the dances for the Nigel Playfair *Quennia* at Hammerstein, performed for Ida Rubinstein at the Paris Opéra, and was taken on for what proved to be the very last season of the Diaghilev company, in London. But he was fiery and self-willed; to say the least, and quickly acquired the reputation of being almost impossible to work with; he also had a towering belief in his own abilities which led him to spurn invitations to take comparatively humble roles. By the time Diaghilev died there seems to have been almost no one willing to take him on.

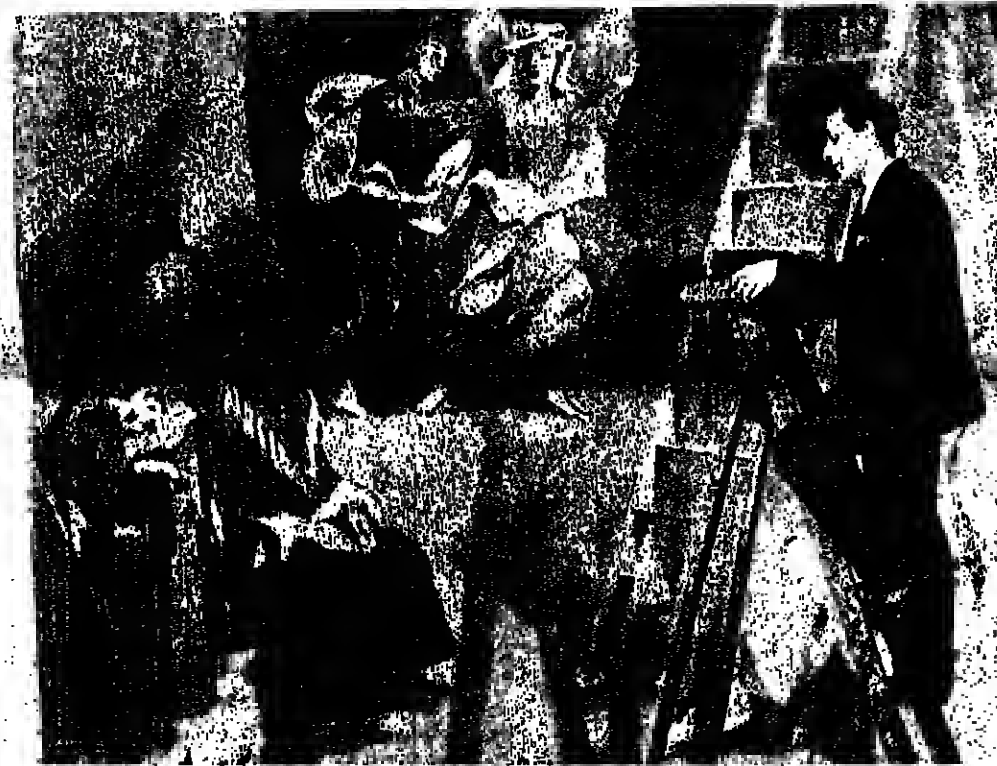
He responded by declaring that, with Diaghilev gone, ballet had no future as a major art form, so he could do no better than turn his back on it and found a theatre company. Even the loyal Medley was a bit stunned by this. But Doone quickly filled in the gap in his stage experience by running off to Cambridge and persuading Sylvia Blyth to take him on as an actor at the Festival Theatre. The results

were unsatisfactory. Doone being unable to remember his lines, so he was relegated to walk-ons. Undeterred, Doone set about forming on the spot a "new sort of theatre", and the Group Theatre was born.

Medley quotes from two documents which attempt to explain what that extraordinary organization was about. The first of these, apparently the work of Doone, is largely taken up with what the Group Theatre was *not*: "THE GROUP THEATRE is not an ACADEMY, although it trains actors. It is not a PLAY-PRODUCING SOCIETY, although it produces plays. It is a permanent GROUP of actors, painters, singers, dancers, and members of the audience, who do everything, and do it together, and are thus creating a theatre representing the spirit of today." Doone presumably wanted "total theatre" because it gave him, a dancer, a chance to do something other than what he was trained for. And there was also a touch in the manifesto of the Marxism-and-water which characterized the Auden group in the early 1930s. The other Group Theatre manifesto was chiefly the work of Auden himself, and it speaks of "the music-hall, the Christmas pantomime, and the country-house charade" as "the most living drama of to-day", asserting that dramatic characters should not attempt to rival those in the novel, but should be "simplified, easily recognisable

and over life-size". This creed lies behind *The Dog Beneath the Skin* and *The Ascent of F6*, the chief Auden-Isherwood contributions to the Group Theatre, but they seem to have been ideas that happened to be occurring to Auden at the time rather than something that grew organically out of Doone's troupe of players.

The Group Theatre, in fact, wasn't really a group; it was chiefly a chance for Doone to build a new career for himself as a director. Even Medley, who shared his life, was not closely involved in the creation of the productions; his scope as a designer was strictly limited, since *The Dog Beneath the Skin* and Auden's *The Dances of Death*, as well as Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes*, which the Group Theatre staged early in its life, depended on stark presentation without "designed" scenery or costumes. Time and again in *Drawn from the Life* Medley remarks that Doone got on with arranging the production while he, Medley, stayed painting in his studio. The major exception was *On the Frontier* (1937), the last Auden-Isherwood play, which required an elaborate set; but by this time the two playwrights (to the irritation of Doone and Medley) had their sights set on the West End, and this play—which was almost a complete failure on stage—scarcely deserves to be considered as one of the typical Group Theatre creations. The Group just missed the chance to premiere *Murder in*



Robert Medley painting the front curtain at the Old Vic, 1938, reproduced from the book reviewed here.

Drying out and drying up

T. J. Binyon

WILLIAM F. NOLAN
Hammett: A Life at the Edge
276pp. Arisph Barker. £9.95.
0213 168863

In an odd way Dashiell Hammett is the archetypal American hero, incarnating almost every admired trait—except one: diametrically opposed to each other within himself. He was an author of pulp crime novels who became a contemporary classic. Patriotic enough to enlist in the US Army at the age of forty-eight, he was later investigated by the Un-American Activities Committee and went to prison as president of the Civil Rights Congress. Tough enough to call down Hemingway, he was tender enough to pay for a GI's honeymoon. A legendary hard drinker, he went on the wagon when told that he'd be dead in six months if he didn't and never fell off again. A romantic who once filled a girl's apartment with roses, he was tough-headed to get tied down by a woman. He worked extremely hard for very little reward, but then made huge sums of money which he spent with Texan largesse—merely for lending his name to films and the radio. Like Edgar Hoover he fought crime, and like Al Capone was a victim of the IRS.

William F. Nolan takes us briskly through the Hammett's life, from his childhood in Mary-

service in the army, when Hammett first contracted tuberculosis; the Continental Op stories and other writings for the *Black Mask* magazine; the three great novels—*The Maltese Falcon* (1930), *The Glass Key* (1931) and *The Thin Man* (1934); war service in the Aleutians; the long affair with Lillian Hellman; the last years and his death in January 1961.

It's difficult to see quite what need this book fills that is not more adequately catered for by Richard Layman's biography of 1981, *Shadow Man*, or will be by Diane Johnson's forthcoming biography. The author himself claims that his is a "more personal" approach; it's certainly anecdotal, exemplified when Nolan writes of Shaw, the editor of *Black Mask*: "Joe Shaw favored writers who were men of action—it was said that Shaw himself, as a crack fencer, had perfected a thrust with the épée against which there was no known defensive stroke." The remark characterizes the author well: his romantic imagination (the belief in the existence of an uncountable *hôte*), his inclination to take rumour for evidence, his use of irrelevant matter and the illogicality of his arguments.

Though he overestimates the worth of the early stories, Nolan does write perceptively about Hammett's work until he succumbs to that portentous solemnity with which most critics approach the writer. He quotes John Caldwell on Hammett's "vision of an eternal cosmos" and goes on to speak of Sam Spade's "quest to calming ritual... in this way he dresses, rai-

the Cathedral, so that in the end they could be compared to little of note to English theatre at the time. One of their more substantial achievements was Spender's *Trial of a Judge*, but Medley admits that this "ultimately failed as a play".

One would have liked to find more in Medley's book about the people, both individuals and types, who belonged to the Group Theatre; there were amateurs in it as well as professionals, ebullient medical students rubbing shoulders with professional tragedians such as William Devlin and Ernest Milton, who played the leads in *F6* and *On the Frontier* (both dreadfully miscast). *Drawn from the Life* is often very funny—there is, for example, Medley's account of a Group Theatre Summer School, with Auden grumpily "watching" Rupert in shorts, a white handkerchief as bandana sweat-rag tied round his head, beating a tambour while several young men and girls in bathing dresses hurled themselves around. But there are also moments when Medley's memory seems faulty, as when he declares that Brecht attended the 1934 Group Theatre performance of *The Dances of Death*; Brecht was at that time (February and March) in Denmark, and did not visit London until October. And in any case would he really have been "greatly impressed" with the activities of the Group Theatre?

Drawn from the Life certainly suggests why Auden, Isherwood and Spender opted for Berlin in the late 1920s rather than Paris; Medley gives an account of an artistic beau monde there which would obviously have been anathema to them: "We talked about everything, but especially about poetry, drama and painting. The word *ambiance* was very much in the air... Although the word *ambiance* as used had no exact definition, we all felt we knew what was meant by it." He is always disarmingly straightforward about the lack of ideas at the heart of the Group Theatre, though we learn very little that is new about Auden and the others (Isherwood scarcely appears at all), and Benjamin Britten, composer-in-residence to the Group for several years, remains as blank a wall as ever. There are some self-effacing chapters about Doone and Medley's joint household after the war, and also an honest account of the limp attempt to revive the Group Theatre in the 1950s. Despite the injection of some new energy in the form of Vera Russell (then married to Gerald Barry who was running the Festival of Britain), the only substantial result was a performance at the Festival of a ballet based on Kathleen Hale's *Orlando* books for children. The *Marionette Cat* seems a rather sad come-down after the *Dog Beneath the Skin*.

sacks an apartment, disarms a gunman". It's certainly calming to disarm a gunman, but is it ritualistic?

The great biographical question is, of course, why Hammett found it totally impossible to write anything after *The Thin Man*, and it's not a question to which Nolan is able to find a satisfactory answer. He compares Hammett to Raymond Chandler, and quotes the latter's remark: "Everything a writer learns about the art or craft of fiction takes just a little away from his need or drive to write at all. In the end he knows all the tricks and has nothing to say. He doesn't point out, though, that this is not an explanation, but an excuse, and a self-indulgent one at that—as can be seen by transposing it into almost any other activity. Perhaps the best comment comes in an anecdote about Hammett, in 1950, in Hollywood, is having dinner at Romanoff's with Arthur Kober, another Lillian Hellman's husband:

Finally, over dessert, Hammett said: "Lillian and I are supposed to sit at this desk and write things."

"That's funny," mused Kober. "When I've tried to Lillian she bought me a big desk to help me write."

"Mine's an expensive piece," said Hammett. Kober nodded. "So was mine." A moment of silence between them. "Lillian thinks it's all in buying the right desk," Hammett. Then he asked: "Did you write anything when you had your desk?"

"No. Have you?"

Between owners and editors

O. R. McGregor

OLIVER WOODS and JAMES BISHOP
The Story of The Times
392pp. Michael Joseph. £14.95.
0718114620
GOOD TIMES, Bad Times
400pp. Weldon and Nicolson. £11.95.
0397782959

In a leader on the front page of the first issue of his newspaper in 1785, John Walter gave his readers a candid account of his aims. They were:

To facilitate the commercial intercourse between the different parts of the community, through the channel of advertisements; to record the principal occurrences of the times; and to abridge the account of debates during the sitting of Parliament.

The Times became established, and its success lasted right through the early- and mid-Victorian years during which circulation increased sixfold, advertising revenue, on which it depended as much then as now, swelled, and profit more than doubled. In part, the paper was floated to fortune by the rapid growth in urban populations, and by new technology in the form of steam applied to paper-making, to printing and to transport. In part, too, prosperity came from identifying *The Times* in matters of home policy with the opinions and aspirations of the executive class of industrialism and, in foreign policy, intermittently with those of the territorial aristocracy. Domestic and foreign affairs came together during the Crimean War, when the reporting of William Howard Russell provided vivid and inescapable confirmation of the savagery criticisms of public and military administration under aristocratic governments which businessmen had been making up and down the country in their financial and administrative reform associations. The great reputation of *The Times* was earned and finally established in the period when those conducting the paper brought technical innovations to the service of journalism. Influence and authority at home and abroad went hand in hand with technical as well as with journalistic superiority.

Oliver Woods left *The Story of The Times* in draft when he died in 1972. James Bishop has now edited the manuscript and added two concluding chapters. In one of these he describes Harold Evans's departure from the editorship of *The Times* in a manner which gives no confidence in his sense of fairness. Although the book was commissioned by Sir Denis Hamilton when he was Editor-in-Chief of Times Newspapers and the authors were given access to the archives of *The Times*, Mr Bishop emphasizes that it is not an official history. Nevertheless, Mr Woods's story has many of the characteristics of such works. He looks at snippets of history through the keyhole of *The Times*; this approach gives narrow vision and a narrative that is too often hagiographical and apocryphal. He puts many of the great correspondents like Henry Crab Robinson, Russell, Henri de Blowitz, Flora Shaw, Norman Ebbutt and Louis Heron, on parade, and he displays the virtues and defects of eight proprietors and some fifteen editors. After the first hundred years, by Woods's account though not by his interpretation, the record contains more of failures than of successes. The paper's reputation reached its peak in mid-Victorian times, thereafter it has been downhill much of the way. The great Delane went in 1877. From then until the appointment of William Haley in 1952, none of the Editors, except Geoffrey Dawson, will be remembered in more than a footnote. Dawson's main claim to long remembrance is that by the latter part of his second period in the chair, between 1922 and 1941, he had reduced *The Times* to a propaganda sheet for the appointment of Hitler. Of the proprietors, the last John Walter was compelled by family disputes to sell out to Northcliffe in 1908. That he died in 1922 and was followed by the Astor family, who owned *The Times* for forty-five years before selling to Roy Thompson in 1967. Although Woods and Bishop throw very little light on the economic and industrial history of their subject, it seems a safe generalization that *The Times* has lost money for many of the last hundred years.

James was the masterful and politically influential Editor from 1815 to 1841; the years during which the foundations of the reputation of *The Times* were laid. He alone seems to have secured that independence from proprietorial interference which is nowadays generally supposed to be the proper condition of editors. That was not the experience of editors from late-Victorian days to 1922. Thomas Chener followed Delane and occupied the chair for six years. With his appointment, comments Woods and Bishop, John Walter III "began to play a much more active part in editing the paper". Chener's successor, George Earle Buckle, lasted for twenty-eight years, the last few of them under Northcliffe. Two years after Buckle took over, we learn that the Manager, John MacDonald, was "in the habit of passing on to Buckle instructions as to the line the paper should take on such subjects as the Local Government Bill and diplomatic relations with the Pope". In 1919, Northcliffe wrote to Geoffrey Dawson, by then Editor for seven years: "... I cannot acquiesce in any more of this kind of non possumus... If you do not like my attitude, I beg you to do either one of two things—endeavour to see eye to eye with me, or to relinquish your position..."

Dawson relinquished his position. He was followed by Wickham Steed, who survived for three years. Woods and Bishop observe that Northcliffe "took good care to extract from the new Editor in advance... complete and unequivocal acknowledgement of his subordination". When Dawson was offered the chair by the co-Chief Proprietors after Major J. J. Astor's purchase in 1922, he made his acceptance contingent upon their agreeing in writing to his definition of the functions and rights of the Editor and of his relations with the Proprietors and with the Managers of *The Times*. He wished a voice in financial matters, in the allocation of space between editorial and advertisements, and the right to reject mischievous advertisements. He insisted that the Editor should be ultimately responsible for the appointment of journalists and that no member of the staff, other than the Editor and Manager, should attend Board meetings. These conditions were accepted. As a safeguard for the future of the paper, a committee of trustees, the Times Committee, constituted by the Lord Chief Justice, the Warden of All Souls and three other similar personages, acting *ex officio*, was set up

to ensure so far as is humanly possible, that the ownership of *The Times* shall never be regarded as a mere matter of commerce to be transferred without regard to any other circumstances to the highest bidder, or fall, so far as can be foreseen, into unworthy hands.

The Times Committee did not survive the paper's purchase by Lord Thomson in 1967. He gave the Monopolies Commission assurances that the independence of the Editor would be respected and proposed that Times Newspapers, the separate company to be set up to manage *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, which the Thomson Organisation brought into partnership, would have four independent "national figures" among its directors. In its Report the Monopolies Commission shared "the doubts expressed by most of the witnesses with whom we discussed the matter whether any reliance can be placed on such safeguards".

The workmanlike volume of Woods and Bishop provides some helpful background for the lay reader of Harry Evans's apology for his fifteen years in Fleet Street; fourteen as Editor of *The Sunday Times* and one in the chair of *The Times* after Rupert Murdoch bought it from the Thomson Organisation in 1981. His theme is the independence of editors, and his narrative relates to his own experience as an editor under Lord Thomson and Mr Murdoch. Had the two historians been able to read Evans's recollections, they could not have written that "the career of an editor of *The Times* is by its nature quite different and therefore difficult to chronicle". Let it be said in advance of comment and criticism that *Good Times, Bad Times* is brilliantly written, sustaining a sweeping power of narrative and packed with pungent witty character sketches that will remind readers of Hazlitt. They will also give outsiders a feeling for the madness of Fleet Street. Evans does not disguise for a moment that he is wrestling against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. "The truth

is", he declares in his foreword, "that passing from Thomson to Murdoch was a transition from light to dark; and all of us involved were diminished by the shadows".

The first part of the book recounts the series of legal battles and investigations that led *The Sunday Times* away from what Evans calls the practice of "invertebrate journalism" by the quality press. There is nothing invertebrate in the sample of inquiries he chooses to describe "the style and values of the Thomson era". Here are the Editor's own accounts of the publication of the Crossman diaries in defiance of the Cabinet Secretary; of the Turkish DC-10 disaster outside Paris and the subsequent legal proceedings in Los Angeles; of the plying together and publication, in the face of a D notice, of the ramifications of Kim Philby's treachery; and of the Thalidomide tragedy and saga. There was cruel irony for the Editor of *The Sunday Times* in the final stages of the Thalidomide inquiry. The paper had collected information of vital importance for the victims but the courts held for four years that publication would be contempt of court. In 1977, the European Commission on Human Rights held that the restrictions which had been imposed by the English courts were in breach of Article 10 of the Convention. As the Commission had included the banned article as an appendix to its report, *The Sunday Times* was free to publish. The Editor asked for the paper to be increased in size, but the NGA machine managers made an unacceptable demand for more money and, in the event, more than half a million copies of that issue were lost, one-third of the print.

Worse still, when the case was finally won in the European Court, there was no *Sunday Times* in which to report the victory because the Thomson Organisation had suspended publication of both papers for a year in an attempt to find a settlement of the regular disruptions of production through unofficial action, mostly on *The Sunday Times*. The attempt failed. Publication resumed in November 1979, but disruption continued unchecked with journalists on *The Times* putting the last straw to the back of the Thomson Organisation by striking in August 1980 for a 21 per cent rise. Late in October, the Organisation announced that it was going to sell both papers. Ownership of *The Times* for fourteen years is said to have cost Lord Thomson and his family some £70 million. Well might the second Lord Thomson have echoed in 1980 what Northcliffe wrote to Wickham Steed in 1920: "the Paper has caused me more annoyance than any big operation that I have ever had... unless the position improves, I shall most reluctantly transfer my obligation to other shoulders... I am looking round".

The decision of the Thomson Organisation to sell the two newspapers was a shattering blow to many who worked on them. Not only did they have to face an uncertain future but they had lost a proprietor who maintained the full tradition of editorial independence established by Roy Thomson, who, as Evans recalls, carried what he called his creed on a card in his pocket. Whenever he was assailed by people

objecting to what had appeared in his papers, he handed them the card, which read:

I can state with the utmost emphasis that no person or group can buy or influence editorial support from any newspaper in the Thomson group. Each paper may perceive this interest in its own way, and will do this without advice, counsel or guidance from the central office of the Thomson Organisation.

I do not believe that a newspaper can be run properly unless its editorial columns are run freely and independently by a highly skilled and dedicated professional journalist.

This is and will continue to be my policy.

No wonder that *The Sunday Times* wrote of Thomson on his death as "the best friend journalism ever had", whose "distinction is that he created a new kind of ownership".

In this way, Evans sets the scene for his descriptive and extensive reporting of the Byzantine manoeuvres from which Rupert Murdoch emerged as the proprietor of Times Newspapers. On this, Evans is admittedly *portus prius*. He was the leader of a consortium put together by *Sunday Times* journalists seeking to buy their paper; at the same time, another consortium, containing the Editor of *The Times*, wished to bid for that paper. However, the Thomson Organisation was adamant that the two newspapers were to be sold as a package and that consorts would not be considered as possible purchasers. Until the reasons are made public, no outsider can assess whether this decision was necessary or sensible in the circumstances with which the Organisation had to deal. Evans also maintains that although Times Newspapers were incurring heavy losses, *The Sunday Times* alone was not. He asserts that the Secretary of State for Trade, John Biffen, was so anxious to exercise his discretion not to refer Murdoch's purchase to the Monopolies Commission that he misrepresented the financial position of *The Sunday Times*. Mr Biffen has since denied this in the House of Commons. Evans says further that the Thomson Organisation imposed a timing upon the sale framed to give the best chance of avoiding a reference to the Monopolies Commission. Apart from the Government and the parties to the transaction, almost all comment has strongly condemned the Government's action. As the change of ownership cannot now be reversed, the most useful policy for critics will be to attempt to limit the discretion of the Secretary of State so that such a decision ceases to be an option.

Evans now comes to the core of his story; his period as Editor of *The Times*, the shortest in the paper's history, and his disillusionment with Murdoch. There were strong attractions when the invitation came. Is there a journalist who does not wish to be Editor of *The Times*? Murdoch "offered a vigorous partnership... my hope was that we could be partners who respected each other's prerogative: his the control of the business and mine the responsibility for the integrity and independence of the journalism... he had said he would not meddle...". But there were other voices. Bernard Donoghue, with the experience of years at No 10, told Evans: "You're simply being tempted from your power base". Sir John Junor, Editor of the *Sunday Express* and wise in the ways of

the decision of the Thomson Organisation to sell the two newspapers was a shattering blow to many who worked on them. Not only did they have to face an uncertain future but they had lost a proprietor who maintained the full tradition of editorial independence established by Roy Thomson, who, as Evans recalls, carried what he called his creed on a card in his pocket. Whenever he was assailed by people

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masterful proprietors, told Evans's wife: "Rupert wants Harry away from *The Sunday Times* because he is well established there. *The Times* will be the bait. He'll offer it to him and he'll give him just one year there. You'll see, one year." Faced with such predictions, he decided to rely upon the guarantees which Murdoch had been required by the Thomson Organisation to negotiate with the editors and independent directors before the sale was completed, and to embody in the Articles of Association. These guarantees gave on paper to the Editors of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* a remarkable degree of independence and protection from interference by the proprietor. The national directors could, for example, refuse to approve the dismissal of an editor who had the sole power of hiring and firing journalists. However, Evans himself demonstrated by his resignation what many of us had failed to appreciate in 1981, namely, that such guarantees cannot protect an editor who is at loggerheads with his proprietor. At the end of the week, Evans puts the position thus: the guarantees are worthless "unless the proprietor shares the spirit of them. If he does, they are merely managerial; if he does not, they are unworkable."

Evans's description of his year as Editor of *the Times* tells an extraordinary story. Murdoch is said to have described his own promises "not worth the paper they're written on". It asserted that undertakings to give the Editor rights to work within were dishonoured, that attempt was made to falsify the minutes of a board meeting and that more besides of an unsavoury nature was done, including ruthless harassment of people disliked by the management. Only readers with intimate knowledge are in a position to test many of the assertions which Evans makes or to judge whether they are part of a factual record of a working institution or if they stem from the despair and bitterness of a sacked editor. This conclusion is not a criticism of Murdoch. It is no more than a statement of the highly charged situation on the basis of one editor's account.

Nevertheless, Evans's book, irrespective of its inevitable bias, makes a compelling contribution to the rumbling public and parliamentary discussions of the position of British national newspapers. One conclusion emerges with frightening clarity: the public interest has no voice in the conduct and regular publication of quality newspapers. The major journal of record may be shut down for a year, the leading financial paper may not appear on the streets throughout a general election, and intermittent publication may become a general condition of industrial relations in circumstances in which all decisions are taken by

proprietors and trade unions or their chapels. This has now become intolerable.

The newspapers themselves frequently and rightly refer to their role in maintaining political democracy and advancing the public interest by publishing the information and opinions without which a democratic electorate cannot make responsible judgments. They also justify themselves – and are to be justified – by pointing to their scrutiny of concentrations of power. They keep other institutions under the lens but tell the electorate little about themselves. Indeed, one of the more unpleasant spectacles is the assurance with which national newspapers, among them some incompetently managed and inefficient companies with appalling industrial relations, lecture others on how to improve their industrial performance. What makes national newspapers so difficult to deal with is that they are at one and the same time an industry like any other and, from the point of view of their special value to society, an industry like no other.

When the Thomson Organisation came to sell *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* everything was done to ensure that the aims of the Times Committee of 1922 were carried out. The Organisation did not regard the ownership of *The Times* "as a mere matter of commerce to be transferred . . . to the highest bidder" or to fall "into unworthy hands". There is no doubt that, in his negotiations, Gordon Brunton was striving honourably to reconcile the financial responsibilities of the Thomson Organisation to its shareholders with the requirements of the public interest. It is an open secret that bids far higher than the £12 million paid for the group by Murdoch were received from commercial and national sources manifestly unacceptable on other grounds as owners of *The Times*. Even so, it is wrong that the protection of the public interest when major newspapers are being sold should reside solely in the seller, however devoted he may be the public weal.

The defence of the public interest from the councils of the newspaper industry is easier to note than to remedy. Devices like an *ex officio* committee of great personages who must approve the sale and the purchaser, or a trust, like the old *Observer* trust or the *Guardian* trust, may work well as long as the paper is in profit. It is salutary to remember that in private-enterprise newspapers, profitability gives a firm base for editorial freedom and independence. But when a paper reaches the point at which it must contemplate going into liquidation, a trust serves no useful purpose. Both a trust and a committee of great personages would be compelled to agree to almost any sale by the threat of unemployment hanging over their employees. Such difficulties can-

not be avoided by putting independent national directors on the Board and devising some special method of selecting them.

A whole chapter of *Good Times, Bad Times* is devoted to the guarantees for the independence of the Editors of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, and sorry reading it makes. Throughout the negotiations for the sale and the first year of the new régime, the independent directors do not seem, at least in Evans's history of the affair, to have acted independently or collectively or with any influence on the course of events. For this, no blame may attach to them because they may have become victims of the structure in which they were placed and of procedures which they could not change in the short period of Evans's editorship. Moreover, Evans's own chronology of events shows that he turned to the independent



directors far too late in the course of his tribulations. It may be thought that he would have been wise for a new Editor with clear plans for the paper and its policy, who was working for a proprietor whose style with his many other publications showed little in common with Lord Thomson's creed, to have taken the independent directors into his confidence from the very beginning. They could not protect the independence of an Editor if they were not fully briefed. But it was not until the crisis had moved into the penultimate stage that Evans sought advice, and then not from the group of independents but from only one of them.

One other device for protecting the public interest is the Monopolies Commission. This is already required under the Monopolies and Mergers Act 1965, save in special circumstances, to report to the Govern-

ment whether or not a transfer of ownership of newspapers might operate against the public interest, and to consider what conditions might be attached to any consent to a transfer. References to the Monopolies Commission have sometimes been taken in accordance with political rather than with public-interest considerations, as was the case in Mr Biffen's astonishing exercise of his discretion not to refer the sale to Mr Murdoch of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*. In view of this experience, the Monopolies Commission is hardly likely to be regarded as a body with sufficient independence from political interference to discharge this task. Nevertheless, a better, though partial, safeguard could be provided by removing the discretion conferred on the Secretary of State by the Act of 1965, and by ensuring that the Commission establishes a procedure to make a rapid determination in the case of newspapers. In recent years there have been many proposals for governmental assistance to the press by way of subsidies to enable new papers to be launched and existing publications to be shored up. These were examined by the last Royal Commission on the Press and rejected partly on the ground that they would not work and partly because they would result in direct intervention by governments in the press. Broadcasting and the press are the chief sources from which citizens obtain news and information. Broadcasting operates under statutory control but there is no such supervision in the free-market world of newspapers. In these circumstances, the majority of members of the Royal Commission took the view that any form of governmental intervention in the press would be thoroughly undesirable. In short, they thought it safer to take their chance with the capitalists than to put power over the press in the hands of politicians. For this reason alone, they recommended strongly against increasing the effectiveness of the Press Council, in itself a very desirable aim, by giving it statutory legal sanctions for use against irresponsible publications. The Royal Commission felt that a statutory Press Council would be "a potentially dangerous weapon of control over the press" in the hands of an ill-disposed government. The only safe assumption is that all governments are potentially ill-disposed where the press is concerned.

It has not been widely noticed that the present Government stated in unmistakable terms some six months ago that a repetition of the sort of press behaviour which occurred during the Peter Sutcliffe case would invite statutory intervention. Political and public dislike of the press is sharper and more widespread today than it has been for half a century, and many politicians who support a free and independent press in public would shackle it if they had the chance. Thus, the times are not propitious for an independent press. Who would care to predict the political consequences of another national newspaper or of the sale of another national newspaper or of a carve-up of Reuters? At this late hour, the best possibility of keeping interventionists at bay would be for the industry to form the Press Council into an adequately financed self-regulatory institution supported by the public commitment of all proprietors to adherence to its rulings and guidelines. The tiny handful of proprietors who still, by the conduct of their papers, regularly demonstrate contempt for responsible journalism and civilised standards can now be seen to be putting the great mass of decent papers in peril. If present dangers persuade the whole industry to control its few delinquents, an effective and respected Press Council could become the agency for bringing the public interest to bear upon an industry which is different in vital respects from all others. Most importantly, such a Council could lay the groundwork for reconciling the commercial and public-interest considerations involved in the sale and purchase of newspapers.

Good Times, Bad Times is compulsory reading for all who wish to estimate the strength of the foundations of British democracy. The tragedy is that its writing has marked the close of a brilliant and inventive career in Fleet Street. Talent of the order from which the community and readers of *The Sunday Times* benefited for fourteen years is rare indeed, and too valuable to be discarded for any

LEARNING AND THE LEARNED JOURNALS

As the Modern Language Association of America prepares for its annual conference, TLS contributors from a wide range of subjects write on the present intellectual and professional roles of journals in their fields.

Physics

Brian Pippard

I have heard that in many branches of the humanities it is customary to publish a paper only when the subject has been so exhaustively studied that the author would not expect to return to it again. Nothing could be further from the practice of physicists, who publish each new item as soon as it is ready (and often sooner) and only rarely allow themselves the luxury of a leisurely survey of the whole field. Indeed, a research worker forced to confess that he is writing a review article is apt to do so shamefacedly, as if the setting in order of his subject is of minor importance compared to adding yet another undigested fact. A sensitive scholar must view the present art of research in physics as barbaric. Old-fashioned ideals of scholarship, however, are less in evidence among physicists than personal ambition, though fortunately not to the point of permitting deliberate deception, which is extremely rare.

In a perfect world innocent errors, which are not infrequent, would be discovered by referees, but the conditions of publication resulting from the enormous expansion of research activities have made this almost impossible. The admirable *Physics Abstracts* provides fortnightly classified abstracts of the latest work, from which one finds that 117,845 papers deemed to be about physics were published in 1982, twenty times as many as there were fifty years before, in the golden age of Rutherford. To see what this implies, let me draw on my

own experience. When I was writing my PhD thesis in 1949, about eighty papers a year were being published covering all aspects of my topic, superconductivity, which was then an unexplained and technically useless phenomenon. Now that there is a basic theory which can be endlessly elaborated, as well as important applications, 1,200 papers are appearing yearly. The handful of senior and dedicated experts in 1949 could and did referee the papers scrupulously, and editors were prepared to consider detailed accounts of experiments and calculations which allowed the reader to judge for himself how well the research had been conducted.

Since then, the number of expert referees has not increased fifteenfold, and the pressure of space and demand for quick publication have led to a style of writing which concentrates on results with all too little detail on how they were achieved. Consequently, if a reasonable-seeming result is presented the paper is unlikely to get a searching scrutiny. It is difficult to guess how much incorrect information is thus fed into the system, but it does not seem to matter a great deal. The digestive processes of physics are strong, and the unacceptable is ultimately eliminated. From time to time incompetent experiments arouse feverish excitement for a while, until the critical activity generated by that excitement has winkled out the inconsistency, and the matter is allowed to drop. One must remember that science does not progress inexorably from paradigm to paradigm, but by stumbling through a thicket of errors and misjudgments, guided only by faith that the truth will be generally recognized when hit upon. If errors that could have been avoided by thorough refereeing are not too numerous, they will only slow down the advance, not stop it.

One might imagine that the research worker, faced with the overwhelming output of his colleagues and, not to mince matters, his rivals, would fall back on something like *Physics Abstracts* to keep him in touch with current

affairs both in his own corner and in the wider aspects of the subject. Not so; *Physics Abstracts* and the *Citation Index* are repositories of value for seeking references or unearthing forgotten work, but the accepted way to follow what is going on outside your own specialism is to read *Nature*, *New Scientist* and *Scientific American*. These three play a more important role in the community of science than one might have guessed, and we are lucky that they are so responsible and so lively as to give pleasure to scientists as well as laymen.

But in his own speciality the physicist scans the contents list of a very small number of journals, and trusts to the grapevine to inform him of work published elsewhere. The most important single journal is *Physical Review Letters*, originally spawned by the vast *Physical Review*, the principal US organ for full-length papers, in response to a demand for quick publication. *Physical Review Letters* reflects a somewhat quirky view of what fields are important, and is the object of much covert scandal-mongering about how the refereeing is managed. Nevertheless, to have a short article published there is to have gained a sure audience and a recognized mark of esteem. Each fortnightly number carries a letter or two about the latest fashion in fundamental particles, with up to seventy authors if it refers to an experiment on one of the big accelerators. Behind this lie *Nuclear Physics A* (for the nucleus itself) and *B* (for fundamental particles) which together run to over thirty volumes of 530 pages each a year, at a subscription of £1,930. Almost everything printed therein is ephemeral – more than half the references are to work published in the previous two years. A not dissimilar story can be told of other branches of physics.

The journal for refereed papers, however, is only the open, traditionally respectable, side of the trade in information. For decades the most feral of physicists, those engaged on fundamental particles, have communicated among themselves through the preprint, a

duplicate and unrefereed typescript which may or may not find its way into formal print. In this way the leaders and the aspirants achieve priority for results and ideas which may prove illusory. A harmless sport you might think, except for the protectionism that accompanies it. It is virtually impossible for an outsider to break into the charmed circle, and although this does not matter greatly in a field that relies on cooperative ventures, it is undesirable to foster a closed shop in, for example, solid-state physics which is a game even the poorer countries can play, and which has important industrial links. The same criticism applies to suggestions for making computerized data banks the primary access instead of libraries; they are likely to weigh the scales even more heavily in favour of the rich. Everyone groans about the information explosion, not least the librarians, but the alternatives, designed to cure the ill, carry such anti-social implications that it is probably better to stick to the old ways, however imperfect and vexatious. An unsatisfactory conclusion, but at least one which is easy to put into practice.

Literature

Marilyn Butler

Academic journals differ from literary reviews, alas. In this literary culture, it's the reviews that have mattered. The *TLS* and the *London Review of Books*, the monthlies, weeklies and quality Sundays, are what the *Spectator*, the *Edinburgh* and the *Cornhill* were – a medium for circulating ideas, information and above all opinion among the serious reading public. The large, diverse readership of the magazines has influenced the British intellectual style, for good or ill. Review articles, though often dealing with academic books, have to be readable outside the confines of one discipline – a requirement which upholds the school-taught subjects (history

Oxford Journals Cambridge Quarterly

Founded in 1964, *The Cambridge Quarterly* is principally devoted to literary criticism, although there are also regular articles on painting, sculpture, music and cinema. Each issue contains reviews of important new books as well as major articles on classical and contemporary works. Recent and forthcoming articles include: *The Founding of Modern European Literary Criticism: Tolstoy's Intention in Anna Karenina*; *D. H. Lawrence and Homosexuality*; *But Kafka Wrote in German*.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 13): £20 UK, US\$45 North America, £25 elsewhere

Oxford Art Journal

An international periodical, appearing twice a year, which publishes articles on historical and contemporary art subjects, including contributions from art historians, artists and teachers covering academic, museum, and educational activities.

Recent and forthcoming themes include: *Women in Art*; *Propaganda, Sculpture, Prints*; *Writing on Art*; *Correspondence*; and *Photography in Art*.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 7): £18 UK, US\$37.50 North America, £21 elsewhere (individual rates available, please apply)

Parliamentary Affairs

A Journal of Comparative Politics

One of Britain's most highly regarded political science journals, *Parliamentary Affairs* has acquired an international reputation for its studies of UK government and politics, but it also publishes many articles covering other countries. Addressing itself on the whole to contemporary developments, the editorial aim is to combine research articles with articles that will interest a wide range of teachers and students.

Recent articles include: *Party Committees in the House of Commons*; *The Decentralisation of Power in France*; *The Lobby, Official Secrets and Good Government*; *New Zealand's Single Chamber Parliament: An Argument for an Impotent Upper House*.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 32): £22 UK, US\$60 North America, £25 elsewhere

Review of English Studies

The content of this quarterly journal is with English literature and the English language from the earliest period up to the present day. The emphasis is in the articles and notes is on historical scholarship rather than interpretative criticism; and although the reviews are mainly of books in English, works in the other major European languages are reviewed from time to time. The aim is to provide a survey of periodical literature, to cover all major developments in the study of the subject.

Recent and forthcoming articles include: *Wordsworth's Poems: The Question of Text*; *Plowman and Hermit in Langland's 'Piers Plowman'*; *Dryden and Trinity*; *The Younger Johnson's Texts of Poetry*.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 35): £24 UK, US\$60 North America, £30 elsewhere

British Yearbook of International Law

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 54): £50 UK, US\$110 North America, £60 elsewhere

The Classical Quarterly

One of the major journals devoted to Greco-Roman antiquity in the English-speaking world, publishing research papers and short notes in the fields of language, literature, history and philosophy.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 34): £21 UK, US\$49 North America, £25 elsewhere

The Classical Review

Regarded as a companion to *Classical Quarterly*, this journal publishes reviews of new work dealing with the literature and civilisation of ancient Rome and Greece, covering approximately 300 books each year.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 34): £19 UK, US\$45 North America, £23 elsewhere

Early Music

A quarterly journal devoted to medieval, Renaissance, Baroque and Classical Music with an international range of contributions.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 12): £20 UK, US\$40 North America, £25 elsewhere

English

A journal of literary criticism, publishing essays and reviews, aimed especially at readers in all forms of higher education, but in a style intelligible to all.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 33): £18 UK, US\$40 North America, £23 elsewhere

Greece and Rome

Whilst its main emphasis is on literary evaluation of the major authors, both Greek and Roman, it does include however articles on ancient history, art, archaeology and the classical tradition, and on the teaching of classics at the tertiary level.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 31): £12 UK, US\$30 North America, £16 elsewhere

Oxford University Press

Notes and Queries

Devoted principally to English language and literature, lexicography, history, and scholarly antiquarianism, in addition to notes, readers' queries and replies, there are book reviews.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 31): £23 UK, US\$50 North America, £28 elsewhere

Music and Letters

Noted particularly for the extensive reviews of music and books on music. In addition there are pages of lively and informed correspondence.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 65): £15 UK, US\$40 North America, £18 elsewhere

Oxford Economic Papers

Chiefly concerned with economics, both theoretical and applied, it also publishes occasional articles on economic history, public administration and scientific method, as well as on problems of the international economy and developing countries.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 36): £27 UK, US\$60 North America, £32 elsewhere

Oxford Journal of Legal Studies

With an emphasis on matters of theory and on broad issues arising from the relationship between law and other disciplines, no topic of legal interest is excluded from consideration.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 4): £22 UK, US\$50 North America, £28 elsewhere

Theatre Research International

Publishes original articles on theatre history and criticism, with a focus on performance, acting and production techniques, theatre architecture, and actors' vocal conditions.

Subscription rates for 1984 (Volume 9): £21 UK, US\$45 North America, £25 elsewhere

These titles represent only a selection from the list of journals published by Oxford University Press, for further details please contact: Journals Subscription Department, Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford, OX2 8DP, UK

Unrespectable opinions

Patrick O'Leary

PETER F. MORGAN
Literary Critics and Reviewers in Early
Nineteenth-century Britain
181pp. Croom Helm. £14.95
0 7099 1744 0

Three quarters of *Literary Critics and Reviewers in Early Nineteenth-century Britain* consists of studies of Carlyle, Macaulay, Southey, Francis Jeffrey, Sir Walter Scott, J. G. Lockhart and J. W. Croker, loosely based on their role as contributors to the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*. The approach is scholarly, the annotation full, but Peter Morgan keeps his wide reading under control as he analyses the attitude of each man to a job which, fit the main, they despised themselves for doing.

Early in the nineteenth century to be a barrister or a paragon was respectable, to be a journalist was not. This social distinction was observed even by men who deplored the state of both Law and Church, and distaste for what they considered hackwork explains why little of their own writing is read today. Yet their contemporaries, Lamb, Hazlitt and De Quincey were supplying minor masterpieces to the magazines.

Reviews are remembered mainly for their

blunders, none more so than Jeffrey who failed to appreciate Wordsworth. But this book demonstrates that he was not just a dunce trying to treat poetry as a dead language, while the Lakeland genius was not so unyielding as would appear from his threat that the *Edinburgh* editor should "arm his breech well" for fear of being kicked. However, much of this ground has been covered by the author in the preface to his selection of *Jeffrey's Criticism* (reviewed in the *TLS*, March 18 1983).

It is good to see Southey receive serious critical consideration. He followed his own dictum: "Say what you have to say as *perspicuously* as possible, as *briefly* as possible, and as *rememberably* as possible, and take no other thought about it." He, too, was defensive about criticism.

Myself object to the whole tendency of *Reviews*, the only way of lessening the evil which they do to writers, with veritable cordialness, with a disposition to belittle the author in question, rather than to injure him, and to recognize that he is likely to know more about his subject than the casual reviewer.

Despite these cautionary words, one of the pleasures of this book, in which the author ranges widely and does not hesitate to express opinions, is that every reader will find something with which he can disagree. When Professor Morgan speaks of J. G. Lockhart's criticism in *Blackwood's Magazine* as being "conducted with a certain amount of honesty"

the same rosy view as Sir Walter Scott did of his son-in-law, but ignores Lockhart's scurrilous abuse of Leigh Hunt, and his shuffling when taxed with it, which went far beyond unpleasantness.

The last quarter of the book is in Morgan's words "a broadly chronological survey of the complex role played by poetry in the philosophical career of John Stuart Mill", including his contributions to the *Westminster Review* and other periodicals. Just how complex the task is can be deduced from the obituarist who said "Young Mill had a weakness for poetry, though he could not find its proper place in a perfect theory of human life". Professor Morgan shows the therapeutic value of Wordsworth's poetry to Mill at a crisis in his life, and how this helped him to move away from the strict utilitarianism imbibed in early life from his father, James, and from Jeremy Bentham. He also explains that this narrow education was not deliberately cruel; that the child was not cut off from all beauty, particularly natural beauty. Nevertheless Mill's poignant remark "I never was a boy, never played at cricket" tells its own tale. It must have been difficult for a man who was never young to enjoy poetry. Joanna Lumley is the editor of a choice of the *Spectator's* week-end competitions; *Poeticks and Paganism* (160pp. Bodley Head. £6.95. 0 770 30976 6). Illustrations by Michael Heath further enhance the enjoyable nonchalance

JP 21.10.1983

LEARNING AND THE LEARNED JOURNALS

and biography and literary classics), places new branches of knowledge (sociology, psychology) at a disadvantage, and promotes a discourse strongly resistant to the specialized jargon of academe.

The leading professors of English – Bayley and Carey at Oxford, Ricks at Cambridge, Rogers at Bristol, Rawson at Warwick – are also leading reviewers, and Karl Miller of University College London edits the *London Review of Books*. In this operating outside academe, they maintain the British tradition that culture is whatever gets disseminated through books, rather than the Germanic tradition that it is knowledge ordered in "disciplines" by an academic elite. Back in the cloisters there is some sense, not influenced by fashion and professional self-interest, that it's time we behaved and sounded more like a Continental intelligentsia. Though it's obvious that a good reviewer needs literary talents of a high order – clarity, succinctness, wit, decision – it's equally clear that these don't match the professorial ideal, which is to impress the many while being understood by the few. Reviewers had to sink in public estimation if academics were to rise, which is why you rarely see, a tribute in print to the intellectual feats regularly performed by the best reviewers, as they summarize a new book, place it, and probably refute it, all in under three thousand words. The professional academic's suspicion of informality also explains why the most important current British journal concerned with poetry, the *P.N. Review*, edited in Manchester by Michael Schmidt, Donald Davie and C. H. Sisson, is only belatedly after ten years gaining its proper recognition. It errs by surrounding its admirably intellectual criticism with an even richer spread of actual poems; in a recent number, 36, the poems took over entirely.

Since most academic journals carry articles and reviews, and some carry poems, it could be that anything the magazine can do, the review can do better. The problem here is that no one has tried to do this. The *London Review of Books*, academics, and too few of them. There has been a survey by a social scientist which shows that the average academic article will be read by 3.8 people. Assuming that literature does no better, the academic journal pales as a medium of communication beside the magazine, with its thousands of readers – or beside your own book, especially if it's reviewed in the magazines.

What then are academic journals for? To provide a platform for younger academics; to

offer model performances in conveniently brief form, for students to imitate; to reinterpret an individual work. Within the academy these are essential functions, and the editors and advisory panels of the most prestigious journals perform a heroic service in ailing the articles submitted to them. It's a measure of their success that an appearance in, say, the *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, or *English Literary History*, or the *Review of English Studies*, or *Essays in Criticism*, remains a coveted honour. But if the journals are there to do a job for the profession, we can't expect them at the same time to go looking for novelty. Universities, an anthropologist has said, are institutions for transmitting conventional knowledge; it follows that iconoclastic articles, even good ones, can be turned down. Opinions, tastes, incivility, unfairness and downright daftness are tolerated in magazine reviews, but authors of academic articles (unless very famous) should conform.

For this reason, you don't browse through an academic journal as you do through a review, in the expectation of receiving pleasure and instruction. You are following a specific recommendation, perhaps gleaned from the annual bibliographies which appear divided among journals like *Philological Quarterly* or *English Language Notes*, or from the admirable syncretic year-articles in the *English Association's Year's Work in English Studies*. As the year proceeds there's a similar service in the *Review of English Studies*, a list of the current contents of other leading journals. All this laborious, expensive guidance is needed because academics, much of the time, feel threatened by journals and by the standardizing message they convey. You can accidentally run counter to the received view, you can accidentally duplicate it, or, worst of all, you can let it take you over.

Within the last few years, it will be objected, the study of English has been invigorated by new methodologies and new specialisms, and the journals which have risen to cater for them are a sign of vitality. True, the interest in theory of the last decade and a half has produced a spate of journals dedicated to new methods, such as *Glyph* and *New Literary History* (both Johns Hopkins), *Poetics Today* (Jerusalem), and *The Oxford Literary Review*, and to older methods revitalized, like *Thames Polytechnic's Literature and History*. Equally vigorous are the American feminist journals, like *Signs*, *Genre*, *Women & Literature* and *Tulsa Studies*. Those who think of their patch

as marked off more by dates than by methodology also have a wider choice. Most major writers have at least one journal devoted to them, and Shakespeare has several. There are journals for genres – the novel, drama, prose – and journals for periods and centuries – such as *Eighteenth Century Studies* and *Victorian Studies*, both of which are refreshingly interdisciplinary.

There's life here, especially where the views expressed are tendentious. Contributors to *Glyph* and *Signs* write with the fervour of those bringing thought where no thought was before. But the appearance of a general intellectual ferment in which we are all caught up is illusory. Unfortunately the proliferation of specialist journals deprives the older general ones of some vitality; "alternative" journals make mainstream ones appear yet more monolithic. Meanwhile the new journals are generally content to set up their own orthodoxies, harder and narrower than previous conventionalities, and fortified by fashion, which is more influential than the most autocratic editor. Northrop Frye comments on the tyranny of modishness in the latest number of *Studies in Romanticism*, in which he along with other sages is asked to celebrate the journal's twenty-first anniversary by describing "How It Was" – before Romanticism boomed, and *Studies* with it. Frye's response seems full of innuendo about How It Is. He recalls that he became a Romanticist about 1940 out of perversity, when he heard a bright paper which ridiculed Shelley in the then trendy manner of Eliot. "In the middle of it I realized that I was watching a band wagon going by . . . It had never occurred to me that the study of English Literature could be just as full of vogues and fashions as anything else."

Occasionally a journal presents itself as an open forum, and even prefers its contributors to disagree with one another. The shining example is Chicago's *Critical Inquiry*, which has featured Abrams, Booth, Burke, Wellek, De Man, Rieucoeur, Scholes, Hartman, Fish, Jameson, Holland. Said, often in mutual dispute, and currently has another long list of academic stars offering their views on the canon. Given the ambience, this is an attractive policy, and since 1974 *Critical Inquiry* has consistently been the best of the academic journals – in what is still a selective way. Much of the most distinguished literary criticism is and will remain nuanced descriptive writing, a particular investigation closely followed, an individual textual puzzle solved. A policy of dabbling privileges the kind of general topic which alone is debatable. Perhaps it's because *Critical Inquiry* has been so successful that you wonder if the format will look as good after a second decade.

Besides, throwing the doors open to discussion isn't necessarily evidence of a liberal disposition: the forbidding instructions to would-be contributors which preface Cornell's *Diacritics*. Though suggestions are welcome from all quarters, they say, "this pluralistic stance does not imply advocacy of critical eclecticism; diacritical discussion entails distinguishing the methodological and ideological issues which critics encounter and setting forth a critical position in relation to them". You should submit your effort only after studying previous contributions, and be warned that it will then be examined by the resident panel of *Diacritics*. Trainee dissidents weren't so carefully drilled even by the Leavises' *Scrutiny*.

Music

Arnold Whittall

The very suggestion that musicology – "the scholarly study of music" – as *The New Grove* defines it – may be a serious and worthwhile activity in its own right has often been greeted with scepticism in this country, and that scepticism may help to explain the absence of the word from the title of British journals and periodicals. Germany has its *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, France its *Revue de musicologie*, the United States its *American Musicological Society*. British publishers and editors, from plain "Music" or "Musical" and

one notable consequence of this is that scholarly articles, and specialized commentaries of various kinds, may often be found between covers which are by no means exclusively associated with the higher reaches of musicological research. For example, the reviews of Handel performances and recordings by Winston Dean in the *Musical Times* do not conceal their author's status as a leading authority on that composer. But the *Musical Times*, a monthly which originated as long ago as 1844, is not to be described simply as a "learned journal". It is written, on the whole, by specialists, but not with the prime intention of pleasing or educating other specialists. It seeks to inform professional musicians of all kinds who are not musicologists, as well as the interested layman, and it contains a certain amount of journalism (reviews without special scholarly content) and factual information (obituaries, lists of awards and appointments, a concert calendar): it is in no small part a journal of record.

There are, of course, many journals which confine their contents to studies of particular composers, instruments, periods, or musicalological subdisciplines. But several, including two of the most senior and substantial, continue to resist such specializations. The *Music Review*, a quarterly founded in 1940, excludes no theme or approach on principle, and such catholicity is also to be found in *Soundings*, an annual on its foundation in 1970, but currently expanding to two issues a year. The title of *Music and Letters*, a quarterly launched in 1920, might seem at first glance to imply an emphasis on writing about music which has some literary content or connection. But in keeping with its first editor's view that the term "letters" serves as a salutary reminder that music can and should be a subject of rational enquiry, *Music and Letters* has never sought to confine itself to non-technical, non-theoretical topics.

The journals mentioned so far may, on occasion, mark a special event like a major conference with an issue devoted to one composer or topic. In general, however, their character is their diversity, and the balance of themes and treatments which a good issue displays. Other editors seek excellence in less varied fields. *Tempo*, founded in 1939, is "a quarterly review of modern music"; *Contact*, founded in 1972, is "a journal of contemporary music", which gives even closer attention than does *Tempo* to the work of living composers; and while it might be claimed that neither *Tempo* nor *Contact* is substantial enough to merit the accolade of "learned journal", they often contain the specialized products of historical or analytical research which make genuine contributions to knowledge. Like *Tempo* and *Contact*, *Early Music* is not a "learned journal" in any exclusive sense. A quarterly founded in 1973, it contains many of the trappings of the popular periodical – illustrations, advertisements, concise reviews, as well as a correspondence column and various information features. But in its concern with what has become a major growth area in serious music, affecting performers and audiences as well as teachers and researchers, *Early Music* has consciously tackled the need to make scholarship more accessible: as the founding editor remarked in a valuable article after the first ten years, "the learned better how to present what often seemed intractable material, for fine scholarship should never be unreadable".

Like *Early Music*, *Music Analysis*, founded in 1982, also seeks to fill a gap, in that the specialization its title describes has not been well catered for by other British journals; conscious of the expense and limited appeal of articles which often involve elaborate diagrams, charts and tables. Yet for all its positive and fruitful specialization, *Music Analysis* also contains reviews and correspondence, and one seeking a periodical with virtually nothing but scholarly papers inside will probably be confined to the annual *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, still going strong after 110 years.

How long all the many current journals can survive, when subscriptions or single copies are beyond the pockets of many individuals, and when libraries are having to make stringent economies, must be doubtful. But it would be sad indeed if the present diversity was eroded

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Social Sciences

Geoffrey Hawthorn

Social scientists try to throw nets over human practice, to capture it, classify it, and codify it, to contain its variety and constrain it into order. But few of them ever for any period accept any such net for themselves. There is accordingly disorder in what they do. There is no settled view of what the social sciences are. There is certainly no clear pattern in what social scientists write and how and where.

Institutionally, of course, there are schools and faculties and departments, and like many of the inhabitants of such places, self-described social scientists demarcate and defend themselves in national and even international associations. Such associations produce their journals: the Royal Anthropological Institute produces *Man*, the Royal Economic Society the *Economic Journal*, the Political Studies Association *Political Studies*, the British Sociological Association *Sociology*. Some of these have a certain authority and publish the occasional good piece. But perhaps like all publications which more or less desperately define the profession they purport to express, they contain a high proportion of cautious and qualified papers submitted by those whose first work they are a claim to recognition and a job. If they advance their subject, they do so incidentally, and even accidentally. Such journals are read largely for their reviews and to make sure that most other people in the trade are in general as confused or otherwise as limited as one is oneself. Except where their editors encourage running debates, which they do too rarely, or where a distinguished figure deposits an address, and sometimes not even then, they are not where their subjects progress.

There are of course exceptions. There are parts of the social sciences where the putative professions do actually coincide with an inescapably common concern, and where the journals are the places to which one turns for answers. Demographers, for example, are just concerned with births and deaths and migrations and the social and biological facts which impinge upon them. America's *Demography*, France's *Population* and England's *Population Studies*, together with the Princeton Office of Population Research's *Population Index*, which simply lists references to all the work there is, are where most research first appears. But even in this field, many of those who are concerned with the wider, economic, political, even cultural, aspects of population, and with policies for it, have become impatient with what they regard as the too fine-grained and excessively quantitative caution of the demographers. They read and write for the *Population and Development Review*, which is where most of the exciting ideas now appear, and which has no clear constituency at all. And what is true for this relatively narrow and technical field, where the social sciences can most closely approach the natural, is a fortiori so for those which are broader and in any of the many senses less scientific.

In sociology and social theory, for instance, or in politics and political theory, there is no agreed subject matter at all, and no agreed way of dealing with any subject matter there is. The professional journals, therefore, like *Sociology* or *Political Studies*, are ludicrously broad. And where they do attempt to impose a frame (the *American Political Science Review* divides everything up into "theory", "comparative" and "behavior") this can merely mirror circular inertia. Such journals, however, are also too narrow. For an anthropologist interested in structuralism will want to hear what the linguists and the literary critics; perhaps even the archaeologists and the musicologists, have to say. A sociologist working on crime will want to read the relevant psychologists and the lawyers. A student of Indian politics will want to see what economists and anthropologists and bankers and journalists and the politicians are writing. Similarly, those with a more activist ideological commitment will want to know what Marxists of all kinds, rather than social scientists, or social choice theorists, or other assorted students of politics, are writing about and fighting over. For these

reasons, it is the journals which cross the professional lines, journals like *Comparative Studies in Society and History* or *New Left Review* or *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, or Delhi's marvellous and mysteriously unmatched *Economic and Political Weekly*, which are the most interesting, and the most read.

There is a deeper reason, too. Journals like these are also the least self-consciously scholarly. Most social scientists were throwing their nets with the greatest brio in the later 1950s and 1960s. It was then that they were increasing in number in the universities and were at once most enthusiastic and most anxious about their status as scientists or as the practitioners of some other kind of prospectively distinct profession. But in more recent years, increasingly uneasy with these self-descriptions, they have been wriggling out from under the aegis. The economists have rediscovered politics, the sociologists have rediscovered history, and most political scientists have ceased to believe that a concern with political theory must either be historical or a mistake or both. At the same time, many social scientists have seen that self-definition against one rock-face or another, the sociologists' survey, the psychologists' experiment, the anthropologists' bush, or self-definition within one method, have done as much to inhibit understanding as to advance it. Social

scientists have been rediscovering the essay. With what was at the time an eccentrically Old World hauteur, one or two journals, like the excellent and truly international *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, committed themselves to this genre from the start. More and more are doing so now. They are catching up with the *New York and London Review of Books* and other literary periodicals in which, almost like the *Edinburgh Review* in the nineteenth century, although not yet quite like that, some of the most exciting writing now appears. Many social scientists now talk as much about what appears in these papers as they do about what appears in their own.

Except, of course, when they talk about books, for more than real scientists on the one hand, and more than students of some of the more arcane areas of the humanities on the other, social scientists do read and write books. This is partly an artefact of publishing, since even in the recession some publishers seem still to fall over themselves to print anyone's lecture notes on anything. And some are now competing with the journals (occasionally with themselves as the publishers of the journals) to produce collections of essays. But it also has something to do with the subject matter. Ideas may be floated in articles, and slices of fact may be given their first airing there too, but the de-

velopment of arguments and the full deployment of what were once called data, or at least standardly presumed to take, more than ten thousand words. As in any field, many of these books are just boring or bad. But more than in most fields, they are not nearly as boring or as bad as most of the papers in the learned journals. That genre, which more academics of other kinds accept, is for many social scientists one more ill-fitting net.

History

Linda Colley

It was in 1954 that Jim Dixon appeared, grubbing away at an article for a newly founded history journal, throwing pseudo-light on a non-problem and all to save his university job. Kingsley Amis was (if rather caustically) pointing a trend. For the 1950s/60s and even more the 70s saw a remarkable increase in the number and size of learned journals devoted to ancient and modern history and to archaeology.

To take some crude indicators, the *British Humanities Index* (which excludes social history – one of the biggest of recent growth

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areas) surveyed 108 history journals this year; back in 1958 the comparable figure was seventy. In its bibliography for 1983 the *Urban History Yearbook* (itself only two years old) cited no less than 250 relevant historical and archaeological journals published in the English language. And not only have new journals multiplied but scholarly pressure has also increased the size of established periodicals. Back in 1957 the *Cambridge Historical Journal* contained just eight articles in its 200-odd pages. In 1982 its successor the *Historical Journal* (and note the more ambitious title) included thirty full-length articles in its 1,000-plus pages. Superficially, at least, there are now more qualified historians being more productive and wide-ranging than ever before. In economic history, for instance, more articles were published in 1973 alone than appeared in the twenty years between 1925 and 1945.

Much of this knowledge explosion is beneficial, and should encourage only optimism about the historical profession. In this country the current wealth of learned journals was largely stimulated by the university expansion of the 1960s and 1970s, which has been halted but not yet seriously reversed. More widely, it reflects and has fostered the tendency of researchers over the last twenty-five years to explore new and broader areas of historical experience. Highly privileged and (sometimes) highly articulate scholars now labour long and profitably on the lives of the oppressed and the incarcerated. So slaves, women, criminals, peasants, ethnic minorities and immigrants have all generated their own discrete historical journals. Ordinary men and women now

attract quite extraordinary historical attention and journals have accordingly sprung up to cover mass culture, urban, demographic and family history. The number of articles and books on the history of the family published in England between 1972 and 1976 was 50 per cent greater, for example, than the number published between 1967 and 1971.

But this cornucopia of scholarly articles brings with it certain disadvantages. The increased availability of very specialized journals has, paradoxically, made historical journals in general more narrow and inward-looking. Thus, although it is *Past & Present's* avowed and laudable aim to encourage articles on non-European culture, between 1959 and 1982 such material made up less than 16 per cent of its content. This geographically limited coverage (impressively wide, it should be said, in comparison with most British historical journals) derives largely from the fact that historians of the Americas and the Third World now have a myriad of their own journals to publish in. In the same way, the author of an article on, say, sixteenth-century peasants can now select the *Journal of Peasant Studies* or the *Sixteenth-Century Journal*. This way he or she is likely to be under less pressure to widen the article's range and context so as to appease the more general reader; and competition between articles and the waiting-time before publication will almost certainly be less in these more specialized periodicals.

Who exactly is writing for this multiplicity of journals, and who, other than consenting academics in private, is reading them? The author of a good article for a high-quality journal expends a disproportionate amount of time and makes no money; books usually carry far more kudos in career-terms and, with new word-processing techniques, can be published far more swiftly than can most articles. Not surprisingly, therefore, most contributors to historical journals are research students who publish bits of their theses, or young lecturers who publish bits of their first book. The motive is usually the (highly legitimate) Dixon one of academic survival and, not surprisingly, the articles are sometimes of Dixon-type quality as well. More generally, however, such articles contain fine scholarship but are – inevitably – narrow in scope. The same is true in archaeological journals. With few exceptions (and the marvellous *Antiquity* is one of them) these tend to concentrate on meticulous and specific site-reports which are invaluable to specialists but inaccessible to the rest of us. Hate again, if one wants imaginative reconstruction, new ideas and cogent synthesis, one has to look mainly between hard covers not limp ones.

Of course learned journals can only publish what authors choose to send them. But the format of some journals could be altered so as to attract a greater variety of scholars and more wide-ranging pieces. Something like the "Surveys and Speculations" feature in the *Economic History Review* allows historians to float ideas they have partly investigated but not yet completely researched. Such outlets are invaluable because without them this kind of stimulating, path-breaking work can only be aired in an academic seminar. Ideally, journals should surely publish and foster the process of exploratory historical debate and not just concentrate on well-digested chunks of history.

Ideally, too, most journals could give more thought to their audience and prospective purchasers. An attractive pictorial cover (*World Archaeology* scores high, for this as in other respects); a lively editorial which informs the reader of the journal's aims and developments in the field in general (another of *Antiquity's* strengths); the judicious use of photographs to illustrate articles (a policy of *Past & Present*); all these superficially petty features can lift a journal out of the ordinary. And that matters. With falling university and library budgets, and with the number of journals increasing exponentially, an interesting format and a broad appeal are likely to make for higher sales as well as for more compelling history.

The Jacobin Republic, 1792-1794 by Marc Bouletreau has not appeared in an English translation by Jonathan Mandelbaum (251pp, Cambridge University Press, £19.50, paperback £7.95, 0 521 27765 8). The book was reviewed in the TLS of September 22, 1983.

Biology

Peter Slater

The massive recent growth of the biological literature in learned journals has brought headaches to editors and publishers faced with an ever-increasing flow of manuscripts, but the problems are perhaps greatest for the working biologist himself. Reading the primary journals, where original research is described in full detail, is as essential as it ever was, but the array of them is so great that the task is a daunting one. There is always the worry that a seminal paper may have appeared in a journal one has missed and, in these straitened times, the proportion of published journals on the shelves of university libraries falls with each cut. But all is not bleak. Those of us in the English-speaking world are lucky in the way that others have accepted our language as being that of science: it is now unusual to have to read a paper in a language other than English, and the Germans in particular have anglicized many of their journals completely. Surveying the literature is eased in other ways too. While the rich can commission computer searches, the rest of us are aided enormously by abstracts journals, and those such as *Current Contents* which list the papers appearing in a wide range of journals. On spotting what looks like an interesting title we can write for a reprint or request the appropriate journal through the admirable inter-library loans system.

Another factor which eases the task is that the very best journals publish a high proportion of the very best papers. A reprint requested from an obscure journal often turns out not to be as interesting as its title suggested it might be, or to concern research which was badly conducted and inconclusive. Indeed, the paper may be in such a journal for that very reason, having previously been rejected by one of higher standing. This is not necessarily so, however, and the biologist must always be on the lookout for important papers in unusual places. But to the person with something to publish the moral is clear: your paper will receive far more attention if you can publish it in a relevant and widely circulated journal of high standing. Send it off to a lesser journal only if it falls to pass the stringent tests that major journals must apply before accepting a paper: such is the press of manuscripts that many of them must turn down 60-80 per cent of those they receive.

The choice of which papers to accept and which to reject is a major editorial anxiety; indeed tact is probably a more important attribute than literacy in a biological editor. A bad paper may represent a year's work by a misguided scientist and it is not easy to tell him to scrap it and start again. Even more fundamental, however, in many areas of biology, is to decide what is good and what is bad. Most reputable journals have an editor or a board of editors expert in the field the journal covers. These are usually actively engaged in research and do the editorial work for its interest and kudos, rather than for any financial gain, especially if the journal belongs to a learned society, as many do. These editors usually consult one or more referees about the suitability of a paper for publication. Whether the paper is accepted or not, the referees' comments can be enormously useful to the author as well as helping the editor to decide about the fundamental worth of the manuscript. Editors and referees are, however, fallible, and, no matter how distinguished, may have some outrageous biases and fond hobby-horses. Some may adore anything that touches on their field; others may not brook competition and so reject it. The editor must often weigh up conflicting opinions from those he has consulted.

Differences in opinion on what is and is not worth publishing may be more likely to arise at the softer end of biology than in the harder sciences, where what is good and bad technique is more apparent and where interpretation of results is less a matter of opinion. In my own field, animal behaviour, an analysis I carried out while editing one of the leading journals in the area suggested that referees were only marginally more likely to agree with one another about whether a paper should be published or

not than the laws of chance would predict. Under such circumstances, having an editor working in the field who always consults at least two expert referees is essential if the decisions reached are to be at all reasonable. Good refereeing protects the ill-advised author from himself, and prevents the reader from being subjected to nonsense. Perhaps its main drawback is that it is strongly conservative. Papers on which two referees and an editor agree that publication should proceed are likely to be somewhat mundane and conventional. The biologist with less conventional, or even downright outrageous, ideas, perhaps because he is ahead of his time, will not get such an easy ride unless editors are prepared to take some risks.

Editors, referees, publishers and printers all require time to carry out their work, and it is not unusual for a scientist to experience a delay of a year or more between submission of his paper and its final appearance. Journals such as *Science* and *Nature* can rush things through if they consider them especially important. Indeed the views of the editor of *Nature* on where science should be going are probably more important than those of any other individual, or that is the way it can seem to those of us who work in a less favoured area. Editors of such wide-ranging journals can certainly select fields they wish to encourage and this tends to be self-perpetuating: the more papers on a topic you publish, the more people working in that area will submit to you. The great asset of these general journals is their enormous circulation and their speed of publication, but this is bought at a price. Only the very occasional paper in my field ever appears in *Nature* so it is easy to miss the odd one that does. The quality of those that are successful is also more varied than in a specialist journal: non-specialist editors can easily choose inappropriate referees and, in the rush to the presses, sometimes make use of only one. Given this, whether or not one's paper gets published can be something of a lottery. To give them their due, however, both *Science* and *Nature* have correspondence columns in which controversial work can be criticized, a feature other journals could copy with advantage.

Many of the new biological journals appearing on the market are, like *Nature*, ones produced by publishing houses for profit rather than by learned societies with the aim of furthering their branch of science. It seems that even the most specialized journal, with few sub-publication lags, low standards and few submissions, can obtain enough subscriptions to remain in business for a while. The law of the market-place undoubtedly operates to keep numbers down, but publishers are forever attempting to discover unoccupied niches. The biologist who persists is bound to be able to publish his paper somewhere. But I for one regret that such commercial considerations have so marked an effect on the scientific literature. In my view the highest quality of scientific publishing will remain that organized by professional scientists, on behalf of learned societies for the benefit of their members and others interested in their field. Both they and the publishers who work for them provide a first-class service.

Art History

Alex Potts

Historical study of the visual arts has only very rarely been in the forefront of intellectual fashion. At the moment it is felt in some quarters that art history as a discipline is in a state of crisis. But despite the cuts in higher education in Great Britain and elsewhere, there is now a moratorium available for professional art historians to air their unease over such internal issues than ever before. The last decade or so has seen an explosion of new periodicals, more dramatic in Britain than in America, accompanied by only very rare failures among the old stand-bys.

Like other humanities, it generally a little behind the rear of literature and history. Art history has recently been going through a phase of theoretical self-criticism. Preoccupation with

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critical inquiry has been thrown into particularly sharp relief, in this country at least, by changes in the social composition of the discipline as the centre of power has shifted away from museums and the art market towards the new art history departments that sprang up in the 1960s and 1970s. In this situation there was bound to be a reaction against the hegemony of the long-established, internationally recognized journals of the art world, in which format and tone often underlined close links with the commercial interests of serious collectors and dealers. What did, and still usually does, define the scholarly integrity of the articles in these journals was not so much conceptual analysis as detailed documentation accompanying the publication of works of art. Here was a respectable and serious connoisseurship where careful examination of the icon could merge naturally with erudite iconographical interpretation and occasional excursions into speculation about the relation between a work and its historical context. As Panofsky said, "we call the connoisseur a laconic art historian and the art historian a loquacious connoisseur". But even as far back as 1948, there was a certain touchiness about the possibility of too close an association being made between professional scholarship and the amateur collecting and dealing world. The *Burlington Magazine* then saw fit to drop the words "for Connoisseurs" from its title on the grounds that "the word 'Connoisseur' now conjures up a picture of an elderly gentleman in white bow tie and trim Imperial. In one hand he holds an expensive cigar, in the other a magnifying glass through which he peers knowingly at the contour of an oriental vase." Serious art historians have long been eager to dissociate themselves from an apparently mindless delectation of exquisite objects d'art, and more so as increasing numbers needed to establish their intellectual credentials among colleagues in other, longer-established humanities disciplines.

Britain was unusual in the later 1970s for not having a scholarly journal produced by a body of professional art historians, such as America's increasingly stodgy *Art Bulletin*. The change that made itself felt at the time could not be registered effectively in the older journals, even where these were already closely linked to the academic world. Indeed the forum for the more loudly broadcast debates over the state of the discipline in Britain and the United States tended to be non-art historical publications, such as *New Literary History*, and here the film journal *Screen*. This intellectual impulse for the debate came from outside the discipline, but it has now critical theory derived from French structuralism, of which *Screen* was a pioneering proponent in Britain, or liberal critiques of positivism which might also be used to "deconstruct" the credentials of conventional empirical research.

Architectural studies, which form a slightly separate world and tend to centre on the architectural schools rather than art-history departments, have been embroiled with critical theory for rather longer than straight art history. *Oppositions*, a "Journal of Ideas and Criticism in Architecture" published by the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies at MIT, is even now intellectually more heavyweight than its fine-art counterparts. The upshot of all this, in terms of new scholarly publication? A number of titles featuring a theoretical or critical political slant have appeared – of the latter the most strongly asserted has been the Marxist *Kritische Berichte*, a West German publication started in 1972. The American journal *October*, that got going four years later, is probably the most theoretically sophisticated of the new radical periodicals, addressing issues of contemporary art and culture. In Britain, 1978-9 saw the birth of three new journals – *Black*, an art college and polytechnic-based production designed to serve a little like the old *Screen*, as a radical magazine of contemporary cultural politics; the *Oxford Art Journal*, which commissions shorter essays, the articles registering the current interest in post-structuralist, criticalist, women in art, and in previously somewhat neglected art forms such as sculpture and graphics; and *Art History*, the official journal of the newly founded Association of Art Historians. The last is a fairly straightforward and solid

academic journal, has built up a reputation for a more speculative and fashionable "interdisciplinary" approach which would not, however, look at all out of the ordinary from the point of view of literary or historical studies; and among the long-standing art-history journals, *Storia dell'Arte*, for one, now has a policy of giving space to work that reflects current theoretical or critical concerns. However, *Art History* has still played an important role in the Anglo-Saxon world. With the demise of the one more literary journal, *Art Quarterly*, in 1979, it has drawn a lot of contributions from the United States, and has served to accommodate the current interest in methodology, as well as the growing tide of work in eighteenth and nineteenth-century studies emanating both from art-history and English Literature departments.

To what extent a new style of art-historical study is emerging, or important innovative articles are being published that would not have found a home before, is another matter. Certainly there has not yet been anything to match the impulse once given, not only to art history but to cultural studies generally, by the brilliant series of articles that appeared in the then *Journal of the Warburg Institute* during its first few years in England just before and during the Second World War.

Philosophy

Simon Blackburn

There are not many professional academic philosophers in the world. But the faculty library at Oxford lists some seventy journals. Some of these have an obvious function; some do not. Their titles range from the coy *Topoi* through the dignified *Zeitschrift für Mathematische Logik und Grundlagen der Mathematik* to the brash *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. One might by mistake pick up *Apeiron* in a station bookshop, but is hardly likely to do the same with *Acta Philosophica Fennica*. Where do they all come from? Partly, the need to publish or perish. When I was visiting British Columbia, the faculty librarian received an airtel letter from the head of Psychology at a neighbouring university, asking if he would mind putting a measure of importance, from 1 to 5, on each of about sixty named philosophy journals. This was allegedly to help in a study of the intersubjective agreement between academics on what was important in their subject. The giveaway came in the last sentence: "co-operation would help the department concerned in the day-to-day running of its affairs." Poor untutored hopefuls would find that 5,000 words in *Mind* or the *Journal of Philosophy* counted in full: the same in – well, somewhere else – would be divided by the sinister figure locked in Psychology's archives. We did not cooperate, but there was a pleasure in seeing the departments which created the weighing-scale measure of academic merit fighting to control it.

I think it is a measure of health in an academic community that there exist respected journals, in which leading ideas are communicated publicly and quickly. This might seem to go without saying, until it is realized that even the great philosophy journals face serious competition from the collections, Festschriften, memorial volumes, and so on which people like to invent. These thrive by tempting the author. It is flattering to be asked to contribute a paper to X's collection on Y. Frequently X suggests a subject and a deadline, which moves two horrid obstacles to writing. Then there will be a fee, which journals cannot usually match. The piece may be reviewed, and one will sit snugly alongside colleagues and mutual friends of X, or Y. I have aimed in these directions myself, and it is painful for me to describe them. There are academics of my generation who have long and distinguished lists of publications with scarcely a single item in a journal. Art thokers whose ideas arouse interest need never submit an article to a referee. He or she need only accept invitations (in fact it becomes a little *à la rigueur* to think of something off and risk rejection). One cannot blame the publishers, since such volumes sell enough, and cannot blame the

author, yet almost nobody likes the outcome. From the consumer's point of view it is disastrous. A journal subscription still represents astonishingly good value: *Mind*, for example, at £10.50 for some 640 pages per year of selected and topical philosophy, is little more than half the price of most collections of half the size. Just one accurate review may save the wary academic more than his year's subscription. Yet the consumer may be forced to buy a collection because of just one interesting paper.

Worse than this, such collections quickly become very difficult to find. One can take the 1950 volume of a central journal off the shelf of any good library immediately, but finding the contemporary Festschriften is a different matter. This problem affects those other seductive competitors for our favours – weekly reviews such as the *TLS*, or the fortnightly *London Review of Books*. These have the invincible attraction that they are known to non-philosophical colleagues. But one ought to worry that a review can scarcely be found a week after its appearance. Perhaps oblivion does not weigh with academics as much as it should. Young philosophers sometimes like to model themselves on white-hot, state-of-the-art technologists, and so refuse to read anything written before last week anyhow.

As I have hinted, the main casualty, in a profession in which these tempting competitors are thriving, is simply the reliable, universal and relatively permanent display of ideas. When major work appears in the authoritative journals it is in view simultaneously everywhere in the university world, and it remains accessible to teachers and students for as long as its ideas matter. This ought to be the primary aim behind publication, and it is better met when good journals are sovereign than in any other way. The problem is to ensure that authors realize these advantages of journal publication: speed, if a journal is running well, distribution (a major journal will have many more subscribers than will buy most collections), and above all access for future readers. Of course, journals have to make themselves attractive to authors and subscribers, which means that they must be fast and well produced. Nothing depresses an author so much as finding that his accepted article will not appear for a year or more, and queues of three or four years have been known to develop in some subjects. Speed is particularly important with book reviews: if the effective selling life of a monograph is one or two years, as is often the case, there is something absurd about reviewing it three years after publication.

Perhaps nothing concentrates the mind on the virtues of journals as much as accepting the editorship of one. But it must be allowed that the subscribers to mainstream journals need pretty hard heads. If you buy the *Locke Newsletter* or the *Journal of Symbolic Logic* you know roughly what you are in for. But a fairly typical contents list of one current journal includes: Rationality and collective action; Perception in Descartes; Probabilistic semantics, identity and belief; Nietzsche and Kant; and Trivial truth-theoria. It is not easy being a well-rounded philosopher these days: with all these lined up for contemplation no wonder that many succumb to sheer terror, or the large-bookshop malaise: since I am never going to read all of them, there is no point in reading any. Heterogeneous contents suggest the influence of the committee or editorial board: a cumbersome way of doing badly what a single tyrant can do well. *Mind* has always been a tyranny, and anyone foolish enough to take over the kingdom of Moore and Ryle will be haunted by their ghosts.

Although it is bad form to try to measure the effect, there is, of course, a pecking order amongst journals, just as there is amongst institutions of education. Everyone knows that 5,000 words under one cover carry more prestige than under another, just as everyone envies a place at one university rather than another. Such reputations are nice to inherit, but doubly annoying, because once established they perpetuate themselves so efficiently: it can be true, and not at all paradoxical, that the best people go to a place because the best people go to that place. Fortunately, reputations are not eternal, for it can also be true that they put off the very people one wishes to

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LEARNING AND THE LEARNED JOURNALS

attract, since a degree of diffidence is a virtue in a philosopher. Also a shift in philosophical interest can cause a journal which catches the bus to flourish and others which miss it to decline: political philosophy and technical philosophy of language have been important vehicles of the last decade, and the philosophy of mind and thought is central at present. Not that importance is all that important: C. D. Broad liked to tell the story of the French mathematical editor who told Cantor that he would publish anything he cared to write, and received by return a paper proving by the method of reciprocal radii that Jesus Christ was the son of Joseph of Arimathea.

So there remains the salubrious thought that enough editorial idiosyncrasy can sink anything. Philosophers are fairly sensitive to what is difficult and central in their subject, and too many articles on animal rights or the philosophy of physical education can ruin the finest inheritance. Unhappily, even the worst mistake an editor can make stands a good chance of coming to light eventually, although in the spinning it is a secret between him and the author. Imagine rejecting the piece which sets a scene for the next decade of philosophy – a te rather like that of the reference who urged at only Darwin's *Origin of Species* were written entirely as a work on how to breed geons it would deserve a place in every goit-nan's library.

Economics

Marcus Miller

Journals play a central role in the work of the practising economist. Much of an academic's time is spent in reading, writing and refereeing articles for them, and the bulk of references upon which writing and research relies will be to other articles.

At the same time, journals are an efficient way of disseminating knowledge, or making publicly available ideas and results at reasonably low cost. But publication lags are quite severe in the economics literature. In an article itself published in a professional journal ("Current Publication Lags in Economics Journals", *Journal of Economic Literature*, 18, pp. 1050-1055) Gery W. Yoho warned authors to expect a fifteen-and-a-quarter-month wait between submission and publication. In a specialized journal, and twenty-three and a quarter months in a major journal.

Because of these delays in most journals, it is common for economists to communicate work in refereed working papers. For 1982 alone, *The Bibliography of Working Papers in Economics* (edited by John Fletcher) contains 300

pages listing and cross-referencing those papers received at the Working Paper Collection at the University of Warwick over a twelve-month period.

There are a very large number of journals waiting to receive those working papers which do eventually survive the screening process, as any issue of *The Contents of Recent Economics Journals* (published weekly) reveals. Yet most economists subscribe to only a few: in a survey of readers of the *American Economic Review* in 1978, it was found that they subscribed to an average of approximately two other journals.

How do economists choose amongst the myriad of journals? The answer lies to a large extent in the specialization and division of labour, observed by Adam Smith's characterizing the manufacture of pins. The same principle operates in economics itself and, one observes, a large number of specialist journals. In what follows, however, I concentrate on these major, non-specialist, refereed journals whose contents have been screened.

In a discipline as self-conscious as economics, it is only to be expected that there will be articles on the subject of journal articles and it is on these I draw to describe the growth of the journal literature and the more interesting features of the top non-specialist journals. In 1968, Hold and Schrank estimated the average growth of economic journal literature at about 5½ per cent per annum from 1886 onwards (somewhat less than the 7 per cent growth for science). On examining the citation practices in eight major non-specialist journals, Richard Quandt of Princeton University noted that over roughly the same eighty-year span the number of articles plus books cited grew by just over 5 per cent per annum, with the average age of citations tending to drop – perhaps because of the increasing volume of literature. The average article in 1970 cited ten other articles and four books. Since 1969 Nobel prizes paid for by the Bank of Sweden have been awarded to economists and – if they only live long enough – leading Richard E. Quandt's list, in "Some Quantitative Aspects of the Economics Journal Literature" (*JPE*, 84, pp. 741-755) of the top twenty most frequently cited economists is an excellent predictor of eventual success of this kind. Eleven of the twelve Americans to have been awarded the prize are also on Quandt's list but only four of the nine non-Americans (partly no doubt because six of the eight journals surveyed were American). Ranked in order of their importance by their own cross-references, these journals were:

1. *American Economic Review* (AER)
2. *Review of Economics and Statistics* (RESTAT)
3. *Econometrica* (EM)

4. *Journal of Political Economy* (JPE)
5. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (QJE)
6. *Economic Journal* (EJ)
7. *Economica* (E)
8. *Southern Economic Journal* (SEJ)

In a survey of the top journals "from a user's point of view", Stephen Kagan and Kenneth Leeson (*JEL*, 26, pp. 970-1003) estimated the likely readership of an article in eight non-specialist prestige journals. They dropped the last two from the above list and added the *Review of Economic Studies* (RES) and the *Journal of Economic Literature* (JEL). The likely number of readers in the US was put at 3,000 for the AER, 1,000 for the EJ and only 200 for the RES. A highly technical journal, based in the UK. (Two other journals, not included in the above lists but ranked in the top twelve for prestige in a 1973 survey, are the *Journal of Economic Theory* and *Oxford Economic Papers*.)

Writing for the producer of articles, Sharon Oster has calculated the "optimal order for submitting manuscripts", taking account of the time-lags described end of the acceptance probabilities. The strategy depends on whether one wants prestige or readership, and whether one is at the beginning or end of one's career. She calculates, for example, that the young, impatient assistant professor should prefer submitting to RESTAT or SEJ over the AER. (Her own "optimal strategy" of submitting to the AER first apparently worked well.)

Notwithstanding the fascination shown by economists in the operation of prices and markets, the dissemination of ideas is not left to market forces. For the producer and consumer of articles, the "invisible hand" is that of the referee.

Law

A. W. B. Simpson

When, back in the 1960s, controversy developed in the Oxford Law Faculty over proposals to reform the syllabus, it became customary to divide the subjects studied into two categories, the "useful" and the "useless"; with the aim of making the law school intellectually respectable, undergraduate should, it was argued, be forced to study at least some useless subjects, lest the institution degenerate into a trade school. The same division can be applied to legal periodicals, but the power to coerce the profession into reading the useless journals is absent. The nineteenth century saw the foundation of many professional legal trade journals – the *Law Advertiser* (1823), the *Legal Observer* or *Journal of Jurisprudence* (1831), becoming the *Solicitor's Journal* in 1856), the *Legal Inquirer* (1869). Many such journals flourish today – the *New Law Journal*, the *Business Law Review*, the *Justice of the Peace*, the *Lawyer* and the long-lived *Solicitor's Journal* itself. Their function is immediately practical; they disseminate useful information and ideas, while at the same time aiming to be readable, stimulating and entertaining – subsidiary aims which contribute to the very high quality which some of these journals achieve.

The self-consciously academic or, in Oxford terminology, "useless", law reviews have a different function. It is to express, demonstrate and set out the idea that law is a fit object of high culture. They too originated in the nineteenth century – in England with the foundation of the *Law Magazine* or *Quarterly Review of Jurisprudence* in 1828 and in the United States with the *American Jurist* in 1829. Neither survives, and the grand old men are now the *Law Quarterly Review* (1885) and the *Harvard Law Review* (1887). The opening volume of the former made but scanty gestures to any notion of practical relevance; it contained Malland on the Seizure of Chattels, Dicey on Federal Government, Vinogradoff on the Text of Breton and Mayne on the Patriarchal Theory. Over the years it has preserved its original character – in 1983 it has, for example, published a study of the "accoutrements of battle" by M. J. Russell (trial by battle, at least as a court procedure, went out in 1819) and an investigation by Professor Herbiggson of the process against St Thomas More. But its editors have also attempted, without compromising the journal's intellectual standards,

to include material related to contemporary legal issues, and to present a mix which will coax the higher judiciary into flirtation with legal intellectualism. (Some judges are mounted to regard its case-notes in much the same way as actors regard their notices.)

The *Modern Law Review*, which also belongs in the "useless" camp, was founded in 1937 with the expressed aim of discussing "the law as it functions in society... in its relation to contemporary conditions and problems". This aim it still pursues and, insofar as any legal flickerings of radicalism and the avant-garde, as in W. T. Murphy and R. W. Rawlings's recent uncomplimentary study of the structure of House of Lords' judgments. In the main, however, it has not succeeded in widening the scope of prestigious academic legal writing to embrace quantitative or empirical studies of how the law actually operates (an exception is Z. Adler's 1982 article on the actual workings of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act of 1976). The boundaries of normal legal academic writing continue to be dictated not so much by some restrictive intellectual theory as by geographical inertia – a reluctance to move outside the secure confines of the law library. The relatively new *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* (founded in 1981), promoted by the Oxford Law Faculty, has not adopted a significantly different editorial policy from that of the original *Law Quarterly Review* (in foundation an Oxford journal) but in its short life it has succeeded in establishing an international character which gives it a special flavour; it has also avoided encumbering its pages with the tired book reviews which have traditionally been an essential part of an academic law review.

Of the best-known academic reviews, the *Cambridge Law Journal* (founded 1921) was once the odd man out. In origin very much a house journal of the Cambridge Faculty, it at one time partially adopted the American practice of involving law students in its production. Today a great majority of the leading American law reviews are law-school journals, edited and controlled by the able students (all, of course, graduates), but attempts to produce learned legal journals on this side of the Atlantic along these lines have had little success, and the *Cambridge Law Journal* has long since abandoned this experiment.

It is difficult to assess the degree to which the leading English law reviews exert a direct influence upon the working of the law, but I suspect that their influence outside academic circles is in fact very limited, though their influence upon legal education is considerable. In America, matters are differently organized. There, the outstanding intellectual centres of the law are the leading law schools, and the higher judiciary is kept in touch with the better material published in the reviews by various mechanisms (such as the written counsel's brief), but particularly through the work of the judges' law clerks – able young law graduates who act as research assistants for appellate judges. Thus the "useless" law reviews become useful and immediately relevant because arrangements exist to make them relevant. In this country no similar mechanisms exist, with the consequence that the capacity of the law reviews to influence judicial decision is severely limited. Senior judges live, unless they are very careful, in a state of isolation, and the profession as a whole has no intellectual centres.

Matters may perhaps change, and there is one law journal which seems to have gained some degree of success in creating a thinking climate in the legal profession. This is the *Criminal Law Review* which, by combining the immediately practical with the intellectually stimulating and presenting its offerings in a bold, unflinching format, has apparently achieved a wide professional audience. In the longer term, the relative decline in the importance of the traditional centre-piece, indeed all types of English legal activity – the judicial decision – may change the appropriate target for the law review: from bar and bench to bureaucrats, politicians and legislators, and the utility brought in the influence it exerts within a differently constituted intellectual community.

Letters

On Translation

Sir, Steven Harnad's letter (December 2) about translation confuses a number of issues. There are three in particular I should like to comment on briefly.

(1) I am accused of "scepticism" about translatability, apparently because I made the point that the concept of translatability is culture-dependent. Either Harnad does not understand that point, or he has a very odd notion of scepticism. To ask "How can we be sure that translation really is possible at all?" may well be a sceptic's question; but it was not mine. To ask "Where does the idea of translatability come from?" is not a sceptic's question, and Harnad's letter in fact supplies part of the answer (thus reinforcing my point, although he does not seem to realize this).

(2) Harnad gets my glossability criterion the wrong way round, and is thus able to saddle me by implication with an apparently absurd conclusion. I did not say, as he seems to think, that it is a system of signs into which nothing an Englishman says can be translated, then the "untranslatable" system is not a language. That would prove that what the Englishman was speaking was not a language. By the glossability criterion, on the contrary, the conclusion would be that S was not a language.

(3) Harnad trivializes the question of translatability by electing to call just any kind of attempt at interlingual explanation a "translation". This is merely obtuse. On his view, of course, it would be perfectly possible to "translate" *Nutcracker* back into Old Provençal. The only trouble is that part of this laborious Old Provençal "translation" will have to be a metaphorical account of modern physics devoted to the terminology of the troubadours.

These three points are doubtless related to other underlying muddles about translation which surface here and there in Harnad's letter, for instance, in his bland assumption that translatability is no obstacle to translation because missing words can just be "coloured" whenever needed. Unless things have changed since I was at school, making up non-existent French words to render existing English ones commonly counts as *faux pas* to translate. Even to begin sorting out misunderstandings of this order would need at least a column or two more than your editorial indulgence is likely to stretch to.

R. HARRIS,
Russett College, Oxford.

'Sohar'

Sir, I regret the inadvertent mis-citation from Fredrik Barth's *Sohar* concerning the political situation of "Arabic-speaking peoples" in the 1950s, to which he draws attention in his letter of November 25. This does not alter my main point, sustained through other examples, that his book shows no departure from his prior attention to social history and to cultural concepts and values whose description and analysis are best achieved through facility in the languages of the region. Because *Sohar* departs from Barth's earlier work in its explicit concern with "cultural dynamics", it is reasonable to have expected a greater attention to these patterns. He is correct in noting that I do not support all his theoretical claims, but errs

in asserting that I am consequently "unsympathetic". To the contrary, I am quite in sympathy with his goal of ethnographically elaborating a "dynamic analysis" of the processes of "cultural production and reproduction" in a complex society and appreciate some aspects of his complex ethnographic description.

Barth's concept of culture is inadequate to his stated goal because it reduces the concept of culture to "traits", "syndromes" and "ideational stuff". If in Barth's view I failed sufficiently to echo his elegant description of the "exquisite manners" of Suharis, it is because the stated goal of his book requires more than an extended account of interpersonal styles and an inventory of ethnic, sectarian, gender, status and occupational attributes in which the basic distinction between culture concepts and social roles is often blurred.

Symptomatic of this blur, Barth perceives Coon's mosaic metaphor of the Middle East as "essentially similar" to Geertz, Geertz and Rosen's views of Moroccan society, a notion reaffirmed in his letter. Unlike Coon, who used the mosaic metaphor as a heuristic descriptive device, the latter elaborates a theoretical concept of culture that goes beyond a description of social organization. Discerning the implications of this basic difference could have been a first step towards constructing a critique of contemporary cultural or (as it is often called) "interpretive" analyses as seminal as Barth's much earlier critique of the notion of social structure. Despite his protestations, Barth's notion of culture, in my judgment, perpetuates Coon's mosaic notion instead of "demolishing" it, weakens his case for an "alternative model" of the factors that generate "the shape of social networks" and leaves for the future an effective critique of interpretive anthropology.

DALE F. EICKELMAN,
Department of Anthropology, New York University,
25 Waverly Place, New York.

Madness and Modernity

Sir, – Roland Littlewood, in his review of C. R. Badcock's book *Madness and Modernity* (November 18), speaks about the illusory nurturing by the many-breasted Diana of the Ephesians. The nurturing was not only illusory but surely quite disillusioning – the so-called madmen were not brags at all but bulls' scrotas sacrificed every year to the Asian magnate Kybele, goddess of fertility, and hung on her statue.

Or should it have been on allusion to the emasculating effects of the welfare state?
DIETHELM CARTELLIERI,
Keltensstrasse 5, D-7800, Fretburg, West Germany.

Tintin

Sir, – Valentine Cunningham's informative review of the translation of Tintin's Chinese adventures (November 25) prompts me to add an observation on the translation of the series as a whole.

Tintin was first introduced to English-speaking readers in 1951; when *King Ottokar's Scepter* appeared in serial form on the centre pages of the boys' paper, the *Eagle*. This translation is superior in one essential respect to all those which have followed it, in that the hero re-

mains Belgian and the adventure begins in a French-speaking part of continental Europe. The more recent publications, on the other hand, pretend not only that Tintin speaks English, but that he is English. To this end even the artwork is altered, 2nd étage becoming "2nd floor", and so on. But, of course, the cars all travel on the wrong side of the road, policemen have the wrong uniforms, caretakers look like everyone's image of a concierge, delivery boys wear berets and "Marlinspike" is not, by being so named, changed from a French château into an English country house.

These innumerable disjunctions are particularly painful in the context of Horge's meticulous attention to detail and his acute feeling for the character of a place. It is a great pity that Mettuen did not follow the lead of Hulton Press and avoid pandering to our supposed insularity: by leaving signs like "Resturant Syldeve" unchanged on the windows and shopfronts they might even have saved themselves a little money.

E. C. FERNIE,
7a Bracondale, Norwich.

'Realism and Reason'

Sir, – In pointing to a Berkeleyian *non sequitur* in Hilary Putnam's *Reason and Reason* (November 25) your reviewer Colin McGinn opines that "what we see need not be mind-dependent just because our seeing it is". But "what we see" is in this context an ambiguous phrase which fails to establish the *non sequitur*. It lists Berkeley and Putnam off the book.

Try: what we look at need not be mind-dependent, etc. and Colin McGinn's case is made inescapably.
HARRY V. KEMP,
Old Hall, High Nibthwaite, Ulverston, Cumbria.

Ernest Hemingway

Sir, – Jim Crace suggests in his review of Norman Mailer (December 9) that Hemingway compromised his artistic integrity and succumbed to Hollywood. Hemingway made only one brief visit to Hollywood in July 1937 to raise money to buy ambulances for Loyalist Spain. He was technical adviser to the film *The Old Man and the Sea*, but this merely involved his customary fishing for marlin. He sold film rights of his fiction, but disliked all the movies based on his work except the first version of *The Killers* (1946). Dillie Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Dos Passos, Huxley, Waugh and Isherwood, Hemingway never wrote screenplays for Hollywood. Since Hemingway's attitude towards Hollywood was exemplary, Crace's vague slur is both gratuitous and misleading.

JEFFREY MEYERS,
14 Lambdie Road, London NW3.

Judah Loew

Sir, – As Chimen Abramsky's authoritative review of Byron L. Sherwin's book *Mystical Theology and Social Dissent: The Life and Works of Judah Loew of Prague* (November 18) expresses some reservations, it may be of service to some readers to point out that his description of it as "the first book on Loew in English" is not quite correct. Frederic Thioborger's *The Great Rabbi Loew of Prague: His Life and Work and the Legend of the Golem: With Extracts from His Writings and a Collection of the Old Legends* was published in The East and West Library, London, in 1954. As the full title suggests it is a mine of fascinating information.

ROY OLIVER,
9 Falcon Street, Ipswich, Suffolk.

Back to Back

Sir, – Breath had to be bated and fingers crossed because the delicate passage from antiquity to feudalism as John Kautsky presents it (my review of his *Politics of Aristocratic Empires*, December 9) was a passage back from the "relative modernity" of the later Roman Empire to the aristocratic empire of European feudalism. How necessary – but alas how unavailing – such precautions were, appears from the fact that in its delicate passage from proof to printed page, the word "back" was sucked into some proof-reader's or printer's black hole.

B. KEDOURIE,
London School of Economics and Political Science.

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Foul play in the Vatican . . .

Igor Vinogradoff

GORDON THOMAS and MAX MORGAN-WITTS
Pontiff
499pp. Granada. £8.95.
0246 118792

This massive piece of *histoire romancée* would make a suitable infrastructure for a film script with plenty of highly coloured sets and detail, snatches of dialogue and flashbacks to the past, pictorial characters and a violent, sensational plot. It purports to provide a truthful history of the year of three Popes, 1978, with a mysterious death, revelations concerning two highly secret conclaves and a dramatic coda leading up to the attempt on John Paul II's life in May 1981.

A prodigy of modern technology, this prestigious work was put together in twenty-two months by two journalists with the help of copious unacknowledged borrowings from established Catholic authors such as Peter Hebblethwaite. Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan-Witts's own vast contribution involved 200,000 miles of travel in a dozen countries, and a hundred recorded interviews, making in all some fourteen million words of documentation, ie, 20,000 words a day digested and excreted at the gallop. Not much time for libraries or reading or reflection. Their lightning review of papal history leaves the reader stupefied by its superficiality; with some dubious exceptions, mostly gathered through interpreters, their principal sources seem to have been Irish or American or both; the authors do not seem to know Italian or the elementary topography of Rome. They call the Tibar limpid pond can walk from Rome's main railway station to St Peter's in a quarter of an hour. Anyone who can see and do such things is obviously capable of miracles and believing anything. This talented couple do not disappoint.

With such omniscience and unlimited productivity, who can wonder that they know the

inmost secrets of the Roman Curia, with its 2,300 members, and the two Conclaves of 1978, for all their strictly preserved privacy, not to mention understanding and publicizing the guarded, deepest personalities of three very different Popes? Their narrative seems specific references and makes up for careful analysis of a highly complex story with the simple thesis that the Soviet KGB is at the bottom of two improbable plots. It constitutes a three-act melodrama with a single millipede of villainy supplying the connecting links. Behind the scenery and costumes, the gossip about food and drink and trivial anecdotes provided by valets and policemen, tailors and morticians, not to mention the informers or paid eavesdroppers who flourish in Roman bars and restaurants, and the minor conclave who deposited in a bank vault his dubious dirty of an ultra-secret Conclave, only to sell some extracts to the authors, here are two conspiracies making the first and last acts of a story easy to follow by the densest minds.

The sudden death of Pope John Paul I, aged 65, on September 28, 1978, after a reign of only thirty-three days, was a godsend to the Don Basilio of the day; it gave the conspiracy-minded everywhere the elements for dark suspicions and still darker rumours. Need the so-called evidence of foul play be looked at seriously, if at all? One anonymous telephone call, believed by some without a scrap of evidence to come from Soviet agents, a discrepancy as to the person who was first to find His Holiness dead, a mistake of judgment by the Cardinal Camerlengo who sent all the early death-bed witnesses out of Rome without delay – these were the grounds for fantasies eagerly spread by extremist right-wing organizations like the Civiltà Cristiana, followed for a short while by the sillier media. That the Pope, a man of feeble constitution, frantic industry and wretched appetite had been in hospital eight times and had four operations before he was elected was well known in Venice where he had been Patriarch, little known in

Rome. When common sense prevailed and it was finally accepted on the evidence of the majority of doctors that the cause of death was a heart attack, brought on by overwork, the rumours died and Civiltà Cristiana was silenced. Not, however, our authors; they have a deeper understanding of the devious and ingenious planning of the KGB. They choose to share the curious suspicions which they have attributed to the Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Koenig, that there was an elaborate conspiracy to destabilize the Catholic Church and world by besmirching the whole Curia with the monstrous insinuation that an unacceptable Pope had died of poison administered by his own disloyal servants. Even though the rumours were suppressed, an unpleasant odour lingered round the Vatican which could be cleverly exploited. Cardinal Koenig is the only important witness prayed in aid by these two gentlemen. One would like to know how seriously, if at all, he took this view. In their opinion Cardinal Koenig is an intellectual giant. He saw the authors once in 1982. He wondered what "the KGB will do next after this success".

The second and third acts of the drama follow easily and naturally. When "Solidarity" was threatened with full-scale repression from the East, Pope John Paul II let Brezhnev know by privately delivered letter that he was himself prepared to die upon the Polish barricades, like two Archbishops of Paris in the nineteenth century. His threat stopped Brezhnev from a march on Poland and rendered John Paul II unpardonable by Moscow. Hence Mehmet Agca's manqué effort to assassinate the Pope in 1981. Cause and effect ring loud and very false. There is no serious evidence for John Paul II's letter of warning. Or is a broadcast by the NBC, denied at once by Rome, accepted by no reputable authority, evidence?

Agca's attempt, inspired by furious Turkish fanaticism and financed and organized from Sofia, is stamped with Bulgarian patterns of conduct. An independent Bulgarian adventure in

the bad old Macedonian style needed no help or lessons from Moscow. The circumstances surrounding Agca's crime point to effective planning by professional assassins, and extreme naïveté on the part of totally outdated Balkan politicians with no awareness of Catholicism as a world religion.

Whatever one may think of Mr Andropov and his gangs (and this reviewer cannot be accused of Communist sympathies) there is no shadow of proof that Moscow was behind the crime. Official Communism (unlike Macedonian terrorism) has never favoured acts of "individual terror"; the liquidation of whole classes or peoples by the million is its method. What possible advantage could the bosses of the Politburo hope to gain from upsetting the whole Catholic Church and the mass of Third World Catholics, just when the great majority of feeling in this camp seems more than ever tolerant, if not friendly towards Moscow?

Is there another KGB jackal waiting to destroy the Pope as the authors wish us to believe? Has the Pope's personal attitude shifted towards their viewpoint, as they also claimed that Pope John Paul II is resolutely anti-Marxist is quite certain; that does not mean that he does not accept the policy of the Cardinal Secretary Casaroli, working for some sort of *modus vivendi* with Communist governments – the only way to get the Church the precarious freedoms it enjoys in Poland or Mexico. However much the Communist party is committed to anti-religious propaganda in the belief that all religion is condemned to death in the long run, its chiefs know better than to strike at individual popes. They are convinced that history is working for them. History will prove them wrong.

Cardinal Hume of Westminster lost no time in contradicting *Pontiff* on a number of specific points of fact. This did not much put out the authors, who replied with bluster. They are not greatly worried about potential readers among people they call "Brits". It is in the USA that they have always had a following.

With such ideological spectacles, the author was bound to perceive a Soviet plot. If he cannot find any direct evidence for it, then it merely proves how deep-laid and successful the plot is.

Yet a case can be made for the view that Muncu's alternative plot is more convincing. It makes sense of Agca's famous statement on November 23, 1979, the very day on which he escaped from prison (or what the author calls a "security facility"). Agca wrote to the paper *Milliyet* (whose editor he had murdered) to say he would kill "this Crusader Communist" John Paul II during his visit to Turkey four days later. Henze wonders whether this threatening letter indicates that Agca "was already being prepared for his ultimate target", ie, the Pope.

But what extraordinary ineptitude for the plotters – otherwise presented as fiendishly cunning – to declare their hand so early on, so patently and so futilely. Muncu's explanation fits better. It would be perfectly natural for a Turkish right-winger to hate a "Crusader Communist" and so inclined to believe Muncu's "All Agca's mother on this matter: "The organization be fall into took possession of his. They got him out of prison and prepared him for the Pope."

If one is prepared to use a little creative imagination, both theories can be combined. Agca was a Grey Wolf who wanted to kill the Pope for Grey Wolfish reasons. The KGB, working through the Bulgarian secret service and their infiltrators, then manipulated Agca who ever really knew for what end he was being used. This would also explain the fantastic and contradictory stories he fed into the Italian investigators. But this theory is not susceptible of proof from any other source.

The thirtieth issue of *Christianity* (Vol. 1, No. 1, Autumn 1983, Steppes Rectory, White Horse Lane, London E1 3NE, £1.50) concentrates on lay ministry, with articles by Clive Stiles, David Moore, Beth Allen, Ellis Stiles, and Ben Dowell and Tom Stiles.

Jumping to conclusions

David Ingleby

PHILIP WEXLER
Critical Social Psychology
199pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £12.95.
07100 9194 X

Social psychology, according to one of Alison Lurie's characters, is "composed in equal parts of common sense and nonsense – that is, of the already obvious and the probably false". Philip Wexler's critique is even harsher: social psychology is "the methodological occlusion of deeper problems in society in the name of science". His complaint is not that it is half untrue, rather that it consists entirely of half-truths, which succeed in conveying something of contemporary American life without suggesting how it got that way, and how it might be changed.

Historically, Wexler claims, social psychology arose as part of American liberalism, standing between unfettered capitalism and socialism. In the early part of the century, it heralded the possibilities of the emergent corporate liberal social order: not only did it presuppose the possibility of a harmonious and efficient capitalism, but it did its best to help bring it about, through services to government and industry.

In the 1960s, however, social psychology was attacked by a crisis of confidence (of which Alison Lurie's witicism is, incidentally, a symptom). Questioning the value and the validity of the discipline's findings. Perhaps the single most important point Wexler makes is that this crisis was not just an internal one: though nobody at the time realized it, the fissures which appeared on the surface of social psychology went right down to the core of liberalism itself. It was the very possibility of the corporate liberal state – a benign, rational, "scientific" fusion of the interests of capital and labour – that was beginning to lose its power to convince. The "methodological repair" which social psychology's critics proposed was a pathetic suggestion: the science didn't work, because the social order it supported was becoming critical.

The ideological task which social psychology performed, however, remained even when enthusiasm for it as a technology for engineering social harmony fell off. From the beginning,

Growing and grouping

P. E. Bryant

SUGARMAN
Children's Early Thought: Developments in Classification
246pp. Cambridge University Press. £17.50.
0521 23645 5

The idea of development dominates child psychology, but it is a notion built on very weak foundations. The idea is that the child initially lacks certain skills and abilities and that these grow as he grows; he acquires psychological mechanisms in much the same way as a sapling acquires branches.

The problem for anyone who wishes to establish "developmental" change is that any evidence for it is bound to be ambiguous, because it will all depend on proving a negative. It is very difficult to prove that some psychological mechanism is not already there, particularly in the case of children. This is a problem which has been quite happily ignored by generations of child psychologists and, it seems, by this generation as well. Susan Sugarman's book is as clear an example as I have seen of the difficulties of establishing the existence of a development in behaviour, and yet she herself pays very little attention to these difficulties.

Her aim was to look at the way children between the ages of one and three put objects into categories, and the method she adopted was to give them sets of objects of two different shapes and colours (eg. blue socks and red shoes). The children were not told to do anything. They simply recorded in what way they placed these objects up and what they said while they did so. She wanted to know

whether they would spontaneously sort them into categories and her results can be described very simply. On virtually every measure (how often they alternated between categories as they picked the objects up, how sophisticated their spatial arrangements were), the older children scored higher and showed more evidence of sophisticated classification than the younger ones did. Sugarman is sure that her study shows that three-year-old children are able, in her own words, "to mentally connect two external states of affairs while preserving the integrity of each one". It is certainly hard to complain about this study to her argument.

But what about the younger children – the one-year-olds? They tended to confine their attention to only one set of objects and Sugarman is quick to point out that this need have nothing to do with genuine classification. "There is no clear evidence that they cognize a whole range of experiences that share the same qualities." "Class-consistent ordering . . . is dependent on the salience of particular objects, or it is the intermittent result of repeated efforts to bring about a particular adverb." All this because these children hardly ever sorted the objects into two classes! Yet it is so easy to think of other reasons. They could have been tired, bored, distracted and bewildered. They were not told what to do and would not have understood the instructions if they had been told. We cannot possibly conclude from evidence of this sort that there is a development in the way children classify objects around them. Dr Sugarman has established that behaviour changes between the ages of one and three. What underlies these changes is left unclear.

– like its economic predecessor – the blatant inequities of class, gender, race and so on which belie the myth of "free" exchange. Nevertheless, it is a half-truth, and a potent one too: as people come to see their relationships purely in market terms, the myth becomes a reality, and the power of psychology to produce (rather than merely reproduce) forms of social life is demonstrated again.

The central idea behind Wexler's critique of theories of the self is that the latter has become reified as the source of processes which are in origin social. He examines, for example, the notion of "the new impulsive self", with its highly individualized needs and enormous stress on self-gratification. Theorists such as Turner, who make a contrast between the "impulsive" and "institutionalized" self, are missing the point: this apparently anarchic form of subjectivity is as much a product of the system, and hence just as "institutionalized", as any other.

The topic of intimacy, like that of interaction, tends to be analysed individually and in terms of a market model: neither the depth-psychological nor the social-structural influences on personal relationships find much place in current literature on the topic. What goes on between consenting adults in private, Wexler suggests, cannot be understood except as a counterpoint to the public realities of competition, exploitation and compulsive achievement.

Wexler's critique covers a wide range, and leaves few of the fashionable topics in social psychology unscathed. Nevertheless, some parts are done better than others. First, his use of the "knowledge critique" of the Frankfurt School unwittingly brings out its shortcomings:

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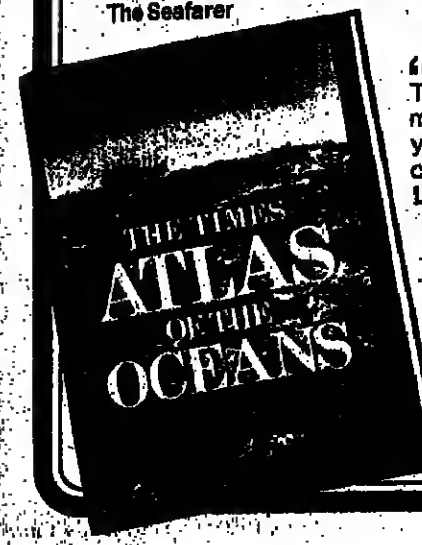
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The carriage trade

T. C. Barker

DEREK ALDCROFT and MICHAEL FREEMAN
(Editors)
Transport in the Industrial Revolution
227pp. Manchester University Press. £17.50.
07190 08395

The counterfactual approach to economic history, pioneered in the 1960s in Robert Fogel's most stimulating if highly contentious work on America's railways and emulated elsewhere by other New Economic Historians, is now not only common knowledge but also (it would seem) known to almost every schoolboy. The subsequent work upon pre-railway transport in England by a number of British economic historians, working independently and using more traditional methods, is much less familiar. Their findings have not until now emerged from the deterrent monograph and the specialized article to reach the wider public, which still lives in the belief that eighteenth-century roads were quagmires for much of the year and that all water transport went by canal. In the present volume the New Transport Historians bring us all quickly up to date in six brief and readable chapters.

The pioneer among them is William Albert who, having made a careful study of the various turnpike acts, was able to refute the Webbs' widely publicized assertion, in their *Story of the King's Highway* (1913), that "if, during the eighteenth century, any one had taken the trouble to make a turnpike map of England, this would have shown, not a system of radiating arteries of communication [from London], but scattered cases of turnpike administration, unconnected with each other". In his original book, *The Turnpike Road System in England, 1663-1840* (1972), Dr Albert was able to show that by 1750 the Great North Road had already been turnpiked for all but thirty-three miles of its length (which were soon dealt with) to the Scottish border, the road from London to Bristol and to Harwich had been turnpiked throughout, and that from London to Dover as far as Canterbury. Only nine miles remained to be turnpiked between London and Chester and only thirteen between London and Manchester via Derby. Indeed, all the main roads radiating out of London were well served apart from those to the West Country.

To the chapter Albert contributes here, he is able to illustrate this by maps published subsequently in Eric Fawson's *Transport and the Economy* (1977) and to draw attention to further significant developments by than in the Severn and Wye valleys and the West Riding of Yorkshire. Much was happening long before the appearance of those text-book heroes McAdam and Telford. The earlier improvers here receive their due for reducing the numbers of horses per ton carried, thus cutting operating costs, offsetting the tolls levied, and making it easier to travel in bad weather as well as good. By the mid-1760s wagons were lumbering along the main thoroughfare carrying loads of up to four tons each – the maximum allowed by law – weights comparable with many carried by lorry between the wars.

Joho Chartres and Gerard Turnbull, who have worked, respectively, on seventeenth-century roads and the old-established transport firm of Pickford, here provide estimates derived mainly from old directories of the growing passenger and goods traffic which ran upon these improved roads. Already, by 1715, 800 stage coaches were operating every week out of London and the estimated number of passenger miles grew at the rate of 1/4 per cent a year during the first half of the eighteenth century, due to increases in length of routes as well as to more travellers. Road-haulage estimates are even more impressive: ton-milage between London and provincial centres grew perhaps sixfold between 1715 and 1765. This traffic continued to grow impressively during the rest of the century despite canal-building.

Why was this? The answer will not come as a surprise to the modern reader in the Motorway Age. Where greater speed and reliability of service were required, goods went by road, even though the cost may have been greater. This applied particularly to manufactures of various kinds, able to withstand the higher transport cost because value has been added.

the raw materials. It also applied to the carriage of mails, newspapers and other perishables, as well as to journeys where much land carriage would have been needed at each end even if the freight had been sent by water. And, of course, all short trips had to be made by road. "The road transport industry", Chartres and Turnbull conclude, "displays a scale and complexity far in excess of that which conventional text book treatments suggest." Much more research is clearly needed here: but of the growing importance and efficiency of both passenger and goods transport by road throughout the eighteenth century, there can no longer be any doubt.

If canals did not capture so much traffic from the roads as is generally supposed, neither did they loom so large within the general context of water transport as is often believed. Britain was well endowed with rivers, whose estuaries were linked by coastal shipping, the significance of both of which was stressed by T. S. Willan in two books published nearly half a century ago. Canals were merely the extension of an existing waterway system; they were not anything fundamentally new. (It is notable that no direct canal connection was needed with London for about fifty years after the canals of the North and Midlands began to be built because adequate water communication was already available by coastal shipping and/or river.) Unfortunately, in his otherwise workmanlike chapter dealing with inland waterways, Baron F. Duckham does not place the new deadwater navigations, limited by their narrow boats, in this broader setting. That canals were important in opening up coalfields situated away from navigable water, is beyond doubt, and they also played a particular role in the economic development of those areas in the heart of England which were ill served by river; but they were only part of a larger whole, and a supplementary part at that. Again, much research is still needed to reach some idea of the relative traffic flows on the canals and in the other branches of water transport.

The chapters on coastal shipping and ports, both hitherto as under-studied as canals have been overdone, do, however, provide clear evidence of the growing importance of non-canal transport. The shipping tonnage in the coastal trade, discussed here by Philip Bagwell and John Armstrong, doubled between 1709 and the 1760s and grew fourfold between then and the 1820s, by which time some of it had stolen a march on the railways and was being propelled by steam. If coal was the chief motive for canal-building, it was also the largest single item in the coastal trade, although this also handled a large traffic in agricultural produce and building materials. Gordon Jackson, the historian of eighteenth-century Hull, looks at the implications of this for ports as well as defining and describing the various types of port. Over the century as a whole in the later eighteenth century the tonnage of vessels entering English ports from abroad was little more than half that entering coastwise.

Tha final conclusions to emerge from this book, including a number of points which individual contributors could have made but did not, are ably collected out at the end but do not, in an introduction written by one of its editors, the historical geographer Michael Freeman. Gradual transition in his theme: more movement, especially by road and earlier than is supposed, with transport responding to economic need – bottleneck removal – rather than anticipating growth. Dr Freeman is at pains to stress, however, that generalizations during the pre-railway period, when capital requirements were relatively modest, need not necessarily hold for the Railway Age itself. Here it is a pity that the editors have chosen to bring the 'Industrial Revolution' to a sudden halt (as the old-fashioned political historians used to do) to 1830. If they had looked farther ahead and had made some reference to the important work of Alao Eyo and F.M.L. Thompson, they could have made the point that road transport, using traditional techniques involving little fixed capital, continued to grow increasingly important, despite the railways, as the nineteenth century proceeded. To that extent transport's needs continued to be relatively modest. The transition was to continue, in fact, until road transport became mechanized, from the end of the nineteenth century.

The sprawling streets

Roderick Floud

P. J. WALLER
Town, City and Nation: England 1850-1914
339pp. Oxford University Press. £12.50
(paperback, £4.95).
019219 1764

Victorian towns were and are unpopular. For much of the nineteenth century towns and cities were thought to be the site and cause of the degeneration which was sapping the minds and bodies of the nation. Rural harmony and solidity were contrasted with urban greed and fecklessness and, as the countryside shrank beneath the sprawl, the image of rose-bedecked cottages and graceful manor houses became ever more attractive. This pastoral image has survived even a fierce examination of the reality in books such as *Lark Rise to Candleford*, *Akenfield* or *Reuben's Corner*. Partly, this is because similar tales of urban life are even more horrifying (there are few cheerful stories of life in the London slums), but it also stems from an idealization of the countryside as something fundamentally different from the town.

One of the most attractive features of P. J. Waller's book is that, both in its arrangement and in the evidence that he presents, this dichotomy is exposed as false. No nation in which 80 per cent of the population live in towns, as was the case in England by 1911, is other than an urban nation; the countryside shades into the town and exists to serve it, with food, labour and leisure. Moreover, small towns shade into big towns, big towns into cities, in a process which is real and which carries with it conclusions for local pride, local government and local autonomy. Waller is very successful in describing and explaining the complex evolution of local government and its relationships with the centre. It is no mean feat to bring to life with sharp pen-portraits the successive Presidents of the Local Government Board, or to clarify the history of rating reform. Gas and water, whether socialist or Chamberlainite, are rightly seen in the context of contradictory fumbblings, pragmatic rather than ideological, to serve consumers, protect the rates and demonstrate local pride.

As with urban government, so too with urban life, Waller's aim is to be fair to the towns. He seeks to present their "variegated character", to emphasize the way in which "Victorian towns and cities and Victorian industry enlarged the material welfare and social satisfactions of most English men and

women". The pleasures of urban life, music, education, sport and the seaside holiday are fully described, while their material base in industry and commerce is never forgotten. The early chapters of *Town, City and Nation* are a splendid survey of the economic and cultural geography of Britain; their only fault lies in the absence of maps. Waller chides Winston Churchill, brought up in London, for failing to realize that the Severn flowed through Worcester-shire, but the best-educated reader may justifiably be uncertain of the precise location of Withernsea, Tiptree or Cricklewood.

Fairness, though important, is not everything and it easily leads to insipidity. Unlike the late H. J. Dyos, the doyen of British urban historians, who used to evoke Victorian towns, their sights, smells and sounds, Waller fails to give life to his subject. Though he quotes aptly Arnold Bennett's irritation at Cowper's "God made the Country and Man made the Town", his writing lacks the bite of Bennett's. For me a rural pond is not more pure Nor more spontaneous than my city sewer. Drains, dirt and noise, in fact, have too small a place in this book. It is as if fairness and fecklessness – doctors appear in the index as "medical facilities" and drains as "sanitary provision" – rule out passion.

The Victorian towns are, however, a passionate subject, both for those who lived in them and for those who now study them. They were the embodiment of the Victorian values which play so important a part in our political and social lives and whose mythic quality fails to disappear before the debunking of historians. Of course Waller is right to protest against the rural myth and to emphasize the material progress which accompanied the building of the towns. But the true character of those towns can only be conveyed by raising the emotional level, while resisting the distortion which emotion can bring.

Edwin Chadwick, the great Victorian sanitary reformer, knew how to harness emotion to analysis; his report on burial in towns, written just before the period that Waller writes about, has the power both to bring tears to the eyes and to convey fairness and objectivity. This is an extraordinarily difficult thing to do and it is perhaps unfair to criticize Waller for his failure to achieve it. Instead he has provided an admirable survey of our current knowledge of English towns in the Victorian age; at its best, as in the discussion of local government, it is *forma*. But for excitement and passion, emotions which pervade Victorian Blue Books as well as Victorian novels, the reader must still turn elsewhere.

Pulling power

Juliet Clutton-Brock

F. M. L. THOMPSON (Editor)
Horses in European Economic History: A Preliminary Canter
206pp. Available from the Treasurer, British Agricultural History Society, The University, Reading RG6 2AG. £6.50.
0903269 023

Despite its rather unfortunate sub-title and the liking for epigrams and clichés that pervades the text, the ten essays in *Horses in European Economic History* provide a wealth of information on the demography of horses. I wonder what Dorothy Parker would have made of "the preliminary canter"? She would at least have appreciated this description of New York streets quoted by T. C. Barker in his chapter on "The delayed decline of the horse in the twentieth century": "The disgraceful chaos of New York's streets, where every reckless teamster is a law unto himself and a menace to the rest of the community, could not exist for a single day in London or Paris." At any hour of the day the scene at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street is a disgrace to America – a maelstrom in which the helpless pedestrian is so much human driftwood." As several contributors here point out, we should be thankful that we do not have to suffer the traffic jams that would ensue from a horse-drawn transport system in the expanded cities of today – as should the poor horses.

The ten chapters, by separate authors, are taken from contributions to a congress held in Budapest in 1982. One error at the beginning of the first essay must be noted. R. H. C. Davis, writing on the medieval war-horse, cites the remains of horses found some eighty years ago at the Romano-British site of Neasehead Fort and gives their estimated shoulder height as a guide to the size of the medieval war-horse; but it should be remembered that the Roman period was nearly a thousand years earlier than the medieval, and a little equity would have informed Professor Davis of a number of ways in which the size of medieval horses can be assessed, including the examination of recently excavated material from archaeological sites.

The next five essays are on the supply and movement of horses and their fodder over the past hundred years, and these should be of great interest to the general reader as well as to social historians. Professor Thompson gives a fascinating account of the economics of horses and hay in Britain from 1830 to 1913 and outlines the problems involved with the provision of fodder for horses during the First World War. The last four essays are case studies of the horse trade in Tudor and Stuart England, of horses in Spain, the Netherlands, and an estate in Russia.

The contents of this small book deserve a better presentation: it is small only in that it is so tiny that it is very difficult to read and it remains clearly a selection of papers from a conference rather than a well-thought book of essays.

The machine speaks

Gravel Lindop

R. S. THOMAS
Later Poems: A Selection
244pp. Macmillan. £7.95.
0330345606

"The ability to be in hell is a spiritual prerogative... Without darkness, in the world we know, the light would go unprized." Thus R. S. Thomas, in the introduction to his *Penguin Book of Religious Verse*, published in 1982. For most readers, Thomas is the poet of the negative spiritual states, a celebrant of doubt, endurance and unrewarded vigilance: in the famous lines from "Pieta", "testing his faith / On emptiness, noiling his questions / One by one to an untenanted cross".

Later Poems, offering a view of Thomas's work in seven volumes from *H'm* (1972) to *Between Here and Now* (1981), and adding forty-three new poems, makes it clear that there has been a gradual change of direction. The expected stoicism, irony and (at times) bitterness are still there; but so too is a steady evolution towards warmth, spiritual satisfaction and a kind of aesthetic urbanity. Where Thomas's *Selected Poems 1946-1968* revealed the many aspects of a bleak, self-questioning but essentially unchanging vision, its new companion volume is chiefly the record of a quest. As with all true quests, there is not only a priceless goal, but also a challenging, malignant adversary. The goal, clearly, is the revelation of God's immediate presence in the world, while the adversary is identified variously as "the Scientist" and "the Machine". But – again, as in all true quests – the adversary turns out at last to be not quite what it seems. Thomas announces the themes governing his

selection in the opening poems. "Once" is Adam's account of his own creation: "God looked at space and I appeared, / rubbing my eyes at what I saw"; he finds Eve, "rising towards me out of the depths / Of myself. I took your hand, / Remembering you, and together... We went forth to meet the Machine." We notice the lack of sharp distinction between God, man and woman: though the traditional hierarchy is implied, each unfolds from, and is, the other. It is the Machine – with which the poem abruptly ends – that breaks the continuity. The second poem, "Petition", re-defines with equal sharpness Thomas's preoccupation with the provisional hell (or purgatory) of negotiation – a negotiation that is now aesthetic as well as moral and theological. It ends with one of those lapidary utterances that so often deliver massive impact at the close of a Thomas poem:

One thing I have asked
Of the disposer of the issues
Of life: that truth should defer
To beauty. It was not granted.

From this point the selection shifts to and fro between poems which turn inward to grope and question in the spirit, and others which face outward to present laconic bulletins – as if for dwellers in another galaxy – on the state of our culture:

Mostly it was wars
With their justification
Of the surrender of values
For which they fought. Between
Them they laid their plans
For the next, excoriated
From compact by the machine's
Exigencies.

At times, inner and outer desolation are linked by indictments of a God whose exploits

recall the campaigns of Blake's depraved Unizen: "God took a handful of small germs, / sowing them in the smooth flesh... There was the sound / of thunder, the loud, uncontrollable laughter of / God...". It becomes clear that Thomas is pursuing a kind of *via negativa*. Stating the worst that can be said against the anthropomorphic notion of God, he also traces a discipline of deliberate spiritual emptying: "I asked for riches... and learned I must withdraw / to possess them. I gave my eyes / and my ears, and dwelt / in a soundless darkness / in the shadow / of your regard". Poems hinting at the development of a mystical path become more frequent as the volume progresses, and a curious ambiguity develops. Though there are still poems presenting the Scientist as bogeyman – "Their laboratories shine with a cold radiance, they come / shaking the cañon of their instruments at us / and crying 'Unclean!' – there are also poems of complete ambiguity ("Out There", "The Listener in the Corner"), where it is impossible to tell whether Thomas is referring to the scientist or the saint. In both it is "the fierceness of their detachment" that fascinates, and one feels that for Thomas the notions of Scientist and Machine are dangerously enticing because they represent forms of the selfless purity and coherence which are sought and not always found in the religious life.

Among the group of "New Poems" which ends the volume are a few records of triumphant resolution. "Suddenly" is the most explicit and convincing, celebrating with Psalmic directness a renewed discovery of the divine: "Suddenly after a long silence / he has become visible / He addresses me from a myriad / directions". Not only "the fluency / of water, the articulateness / of green leaves" are transfigured, but also "the song of the chain-saw" and the writing of "the surgeon's hand / on the skin's parchment". Finally, "weeds, stones, instruments, / the machine itself" all speak "the vernacular / of the purposes of One who is". Thomas's poetry has often been praised for

its "austerity", but perhaps not enough has been made of its corresponding richness. Certainly there is an austerity of form, with hardly a rhyme or a repeated metrical pattern in the whole of this book. Each poem seems to take shape of necessity from its materials and the fibre of their expression, plain and surprising as a piece of polished driftwood. But the deliberate restrictiveness of themes and images leads to a growing resonance of meaning. Familiar elements are recombined and viewed from new angles, meshed together by ironies, ambiguities and mutual qualifications, which for Thomas have become a formal device, often plaiting themselves into linguistic knots of considerable symmetry and complexity in the last lines of a poem. A good example is "The Moment", where Thomas asks whether there is "an ingredient... of unlove" in God, and answers:

It is the moment in the mind's
garden he resigns himself
to his own will to conceive the tree
of manhood we have reared against him.

A similar effect is created by the last poem of the volume, "Prayer", which is slipped in like an afterthought opposite the first page of the index:

Baudelaire's grave
not too far
from the tree of science.
Mine, too,
since I sought and failed
to steal from it,
somewhere within sight
of the tree of poetry
that is eternally wearing
the green leaves of time.

The Trees of Knowledge and Life, "stealing" as theft and flight, echoes of Blake and Yeats are woven into an utterance of extreme brevity, with the appearance of casual plainness that denotes a complete mastery of the medium. On the evidence of this selection and its predecessor, R. S. Thomas is our best living religious poet and one of the two or three finest poets now writing in Britain.

Of Armenian clay

John Greppin

PETER BALKIAN
Sad Days of Light
80pp. New York: Sheep Meadow Press.
\$13.95.
095286336

Sad Days of Light is American poetry, but it is also a mirror of the Armenian oriental consciousness which is Peter Balkian's heritage. Though the poems reflect traditional American views of justice and injustice, they also convey clearly the current Armenian anguish. An aged grandmother appears repeatedly in separate poems; a grandmother who tells tall stories to small children, but also a grandmother with a moral power that transcends her feeble body as she goads her Armenian-American descendants into rage at the Ottoman horror of earlier times and the continuing arrogance of the Turks today. Eventually these words transmit a metaphor of decay and despair, the shame of incompetence as witnessed by the Armenian fathers at the turn of the century who couldn't save their children's lives; on the simplest level they mean that none of us gets along with each other as we should. Yet there is a competing pride and hope; pride that the Armenians survived at all, against such odds and through so many centuries; and hope that they can return again to their own land. These various elements are distinct in the poetry of Peter Balkian, and they keep approaching each other through the pages of *Sad Days of Light*.

The Turks are everywhere. We know they were coming. And they could hear machine guns whining in our ears. They gave themselves away; they drank all night. In the morning beat the horses. My grandmother said when it rained: "The blood value for a person / was ordered to be 100 mg. by decree of the Sultan"; to which Peter Balkian responds antiphonally, "I feel the fatal / in my pants." ("The Claim"). But the conversation continues; the people flee. The blood value for a person / was ordered to be 100 mg. by decree of the Sultan; to which Peter Balkian responds antiphonally, "I feel the fatal / in my pants." ("The Claim"). But the conversation continues; the people flee.


gone; the brooches and jade buried in the clay of Armenia.

And though Grandmother comes safely to America, not all of her actually makes it; fragments are left in Anatolia and she begins to see two worlds at once ("First Nervous Breakdown, Newark 1941"): "and when you walked / into the store / you kicked the empty / pants and asked for legs. / And the hanging ribs / fresh and red / with the bright white / bone like oocyte / running through - / she said you hit it / with your cane / until it screamed."

Peter Balkian is deadly serious. What he describes is what he cannot otherwise control. He wants to give back Armenia to his grandmother, born Nafina Aroosian in Diarbekir, Armenia, and to the grandfather he never knew, Diran Balkian of Tokad, Armenia; he talks about early friends of the family, the poet Siamanto (whom Peter Balkian must have read in the original – translations are uncommon), and about Arshile Gorky, the painter. But these references are sometimes obscure and, since the reader of poetry respects philology, it would have been useful to have more notes to go with those that already appear in the back. But we are grateful for what we have, the thoughts of survivors from before My Lai, Buchenwald, Guernica, the Somme, and then of Diarbekir, Turkish Armenia.

R. L. Mackie's *A Book of Scottish Verse* was first published in OUP's World's Classics series in 1934. It covered 550 years of Scottish poetry, from Barbour's "Freedom" to the First World War, and passed through five reprints before a second edition was prepared by Maurice Lindsay in 1967. The third edition has been updated and augmented by Mr Lindsay and is issued by a different publisher: (476pp. Robert Hale. £12.50). The most noticeable addition is a selection of work by poets whose careers began in earnest after 1967, such as Douglas Dunn, Andrew Greig and Liz Lochhead. Mr Lindsay, to his introduction, sounds uneasy over his inclusion of the latter, but there is no doubting his pleasure in being able to include Robert Garloch at last, though he occupies less space than Maurice Lindsay. Modestly apart, the most important alteration from Mackie's original selection is the substitution of three sections from James (B. V.) Thomson's collected "City of Dreadful Night" for a lesser poem,

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Trawlermen in the dock

Stephen Mills

VLADYSLAV LYSENKO
A Crime Against The World: Memoirs of a
Russian Sea Captain
Translated by Michael Glenn
254pp. Gollancz. £9.95.
0575 03139 5

A recent Soviet broadcast announced a 30 per cent increase in the production of edible-grade fish. The new quotas were being met by fishing for "moiva" off the Kola peninsula in the Barents Sea. To Vladly Lysenko, a captain with the Murmansk fishing fleet for seventeen years until he defected to Sweden in 1975, this was not just the familiar economic propaganda. Rather, it indicated a new climax in what he sees as Russia's crass contempt for the principles of conservation.

"Moiva" are baby whiting. They comprise the staple diet of cod and halibut. Although the reputed experts of the Russian Polar Research Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography still believed, as late as 1968, that fish-stocks in the Barents Sea were inexhaustible, cod had been effectively eliminated there by the end of the 1950s. Now, deep-sea super-trawlers, able to freeze seventy tonnes of fish a day, are hovering up the small fry from the sea's shallow inshore waters. This means that even if the cod could be protected, they could never re-establish themselves in the region. There would simply be nothing for them to eat.

With the cod have gone the multitudes of golden perch, silver hake and herring, sacrificed to fulfil arbitrary production plans that bear no relation to the state of the world's fisheries. Lysenko remembers them all: how little silver hake fry were mopped up for years before Russian captains even knew there was an adult form; how golden perch were yanked from the sea-bottom so fast that their bladders burst, ruining their flesh; and how apex predators like walrus and seals were being killed for their blubber. Hundreds of Soviet trawlers would crowd George's Bank off the north-east coast of America, where the herring once gathered to spawn. Net after net came up, grasping thirty tonnes in a sweep, and the pregnant females, crushed against the threads, sent their wasted roe out in jets as the trawls came clear of the water.

The waste did not stop at sea. Lysenko recalls 30,000 tonnes of salted herring from Murmansk alone being taken into the tundra and set alight. The inland market was glutted, its treatment rendered the fish unsaleable in the West and space was required on the quays for more of the same. While the fleets have expanded to exploit each new migration route and each new spawning bed, harbour facilities have remained primitive. Thus, when sea perch catches soared, the Murmansk authorities ordered Lysenko and his fellow captains

to rush out and fill their holds with fresh, ungutted fish. Teams of workers were conscripted to process them on land. But as the trawlers queued up as usual outside the harbours, waiting sometimes for five days to be unloaded, their thousands of tonnes of seapercch rotted and had to be jettisoned. Lysenko calculates that less than a third of Soviet catches ever reached the table.

For his part in these ecological disasters, Lysenko was awarded the Order of Lenin. "Did I know what I was doing?" he asks. "Yes I knew. That is my guilt, my failure and the tragedy of my life."

Ships being sent to sea unfit for service, whole crews lost because captains feared the cost in precious foreign currency of being salvaged, a widow charged for the clothes her husband was drowned in — these are the other side of the coin of exploitation. For a tonne of silver hake the men on a factory trawler would share nine roubles and eighty kopeks, while the state would sell it for 740 roubles: 5 per cent for the workers, 95 per cent for the employer. At that rate the ship pays for itself in under two years.

And where does the subsequent profit go? Part of it, apparently, on preparing the Soviet fishing and merchantile fleets for war. Foreign-built vessels are refitted to Soviet specifications. They receive little luxuries like naval-type bulkhead doors, anti-radiation protection systems intended to envelop a ship in a cloud of spray when passing through contaminated areas, and stocks of protective clothing for handling chemicals. Every ship and every crew member has a predetermined role and rank in the event of war. In the meantime, because they can travel where Soviet warships cannot, they are employed on a ceaseless round of espionage, reporting all foreign warships, hydrographical data of foreign ports, powerlines, buildings, repairs. . . . Failure to catch fish arouses criticism, failure to spy means dismissal or worse.

Lysenko's assertions have important ecological, economic and military implications. Unfortunately, however, his book occasionally strays towards the incoherent language and self-righteousness of propaganda. It is a tendency that can never compensate for the real depth of hard data which the book lacks: few dates, few figures, no footnotes.

I am persuaded of Soviet ineptitudes. I am not as convinced as Lysenko that the West is in every way better. Our failure to conserve fish through a common fisheries policy; a Common Agricultural Policy which wastes food; chemical companies marketing substances like Tris to which 50,000 cancer deaths a year are now being attributed; mothers' milk in America which contains seven times the limit of PCBs permitted in baby food and would be illegal if sold; how would these look to a concerned Russian? We would be unwise if we allowed our contemplation of Soviet mass economic mismanagement to deflect us from attending to our own.

Timber under threat

Scott Leathart

R. H. RICHES
Elm
347pp. Cambridge University Press. £35.
0521 249163

R. H. Riches, in this immensely well-researched and readable book, traces the history of a tree which, originally introduced for economic reasons, became one of the principal English landscape species and one of varying economic importance as modes of living changed with the times. Facts are carefully marshalled, opinions are expressed without a trace of arrogance ("There is much hypothesis in the book. . . . If the reader seeks certainty he must go elsewhere") and anecdotes are related with humour. Mr Riches's affection for the elm is apparent though he never allows himself to become sentimental about it in the way that many of the writers and poets from whom he quotes become; he assesses its future dispassionately and with optimism.

The English elm has been a dominant

feature of the English countryside, and has had such an influence on artists and poets throughout recent centuries, that the species, smitten and destroyed by a disease brought from abroad, is greatly missed in areas where it once flourished, particularly in Southern England. Yet, the English elm is not a native species, nor does it resemble the elms of Northern France; it has close affinity with the elms of Galicia and evidence suggests that it was brought to the Salisbury Plain area by the Late Bronze Age settlers. Other types of Field elm, such as the Narrow-leaved elm of East Anglia, correspond with those in the Upper Elbe region; only the Field elm of Kent and a small part of East Sussex have any affinity with those of Northern France. Long before the arrival of man, the native Wych elm became established in Britain, but being a woodland species and a much less impressive tree, it has never had such an effect on the landscape as the English elm, whether standing alone or grouped with a few others, tall, stately, with its blowing crown.

Perhaps the most fascinating thing about elms, apart from their extreme variability, is their close association with human settlement

Kiwis and Kakapos

Redmond O'Hanlon

C. A. FLEMING
George Edward Lodge, Unpublished Bird Paintings
409pp. Michael Joseph, in association with the National Museum of New Zealand. £75.
01781 2212 7

George Edward Lodge, *Unpublished Bird Paintings* is a remarkable book. Lodge (1860-1954), an English artist-naturalist perhaps second only to Archibald Thorburn (1860-1935), was in 1912 commissioned by James Drummond and the New Zealand government to paint the birds of New Zealand for a book which Drummond planned but never completed. The plates were finished by about 1914 when Lodge began work on his illustrations for the journal of Edwin Montagu's gamekeeper, Jim Vincent, a collection which has likewise only recently been published, as *A Season of Birds: a Norfolk Diary, 1911* (TLS, December 19, 1980). This previously unsuspected wealth from Lodge's middle period (he is best known for his twelve-volume collaboration with David Bannerman, *The Birds of the British Isles, 1953-63*) will greatly enhance his reputation. And the brilliant text by the New Zealand ornithologist and palaeontologist, Sir Charles Fleming, the direct, same-scale reproduction of Lodge's water-colours (each one fully

documented on its reverse side with details of the actual specimen he probably used, the other names of the species, and the places where further illustrations are to be found), the full index, the 350 references and the loving presentation of this volume as a whole almost make up for the seventy years of neglect.

It is a work of many delights — the evolutionary story of each bird that Lodge illustrates, the recent history of their separate discoveries, and descriptions, say, of the feeding of the Kiwi: "they exhale noisily as they tap and probe the soil, perhaps to clear their nasal passages, which open near the tip of the beak"; or of the giant, flightless Kakapo, a dumpy, grass-green parrot with little rounded wings and a face like an owl that lives in holes in the ground and comes out at night; or of the Wry-hill, a small endemic plover, the only bird in the world with its head bent to one side, a right-handed kink which forces it to feed clockwise round pebbles; or the Blue Duck, Cook's "Duck of Blue grey Plumage with the end of its Bill as soft as the lips of any other animal" (1773); or, indeed, the Huia themselves, elegant, black, hoopoe-like birds with long white-tipped tail feathers much prized by the Maori, and whose bills vary so much between the sexes — the male equipped with mandibles strong enough to split open rotting wood, the female with a long curved beak adapted for probing for grubs — that in 1836 Gould thought they characterized two different species.

The sett set

Ernest Neal

CHARLES A. LONG and CARL ARTHUR KILLINGLEY
The Badgers of the World
404pp. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas. \$39.75.
0398 04741 3

Badgers have achieved considerable popularity over the past few decades, particularly in Britain. They have been pictured on stamps, used as the emblem of conservation societies, had an act of parliament passed to protect them, been the subject of a number of television programmes and had many books written about them. Now we have *Badgers of the World*, an ambitious work written by an American professor of biology and a British amateur naturalist.

By attempting to cover so much ground, and writing for both the general naturalist and the more scientific reader, it is hardly surprising that the authors have produced a book of very uneven quality and content. The structural and classificatory aspects of the various species are covered well and in considerable detail (for example, twenty-three pages are devoted to geographic variation and sub-speciation in the Eurasian badger) and this reflects the particular interests and expertise of one of the au-

thors. But the ecological and behavioural sections are treated much more superficially, and for the Eurasian badger the need to summarize from the wealth of available data has resulted in some careless errors and simplistic statements which are sometimes misleading.

The early chapters deal with characteristics common to all badgers. One describes American and European badgers in folk lore, folk and history, badger persecution over the ages, and the use of badger products ranging from shaving-brushes to sports. Other chapters describe the adaptations of badgers for digging, the significance of their colour patterns and the uses made of their musk glands. There is also a useful section on the possible evolution of badgers based on structural and fossil evidence. Then follows a series of chapters covering the individual species.

Readers mainly familiar with the Eurasian badger will find the section on the American badger particularly interesting, as previously information on this species was widely scattered in scientific papers and popular articles. In contrast to the Eurasian badger it is more carnivorous, a hunter more than a forager, preying on a wide variety of animals, but particularly rodents, which are often chased with surprising agility.

Those intriguing animals, the Ferret badgers of south-east Asia, the well-named Siam badgers of Indonesia and the Hog badgers of China and south-east Asia are treated much more briefly. This is understandable, as so little field research has been done on them, and, being nocturnal and secretive, they are seldom seen. By way of comparison there is a short account of the Honey badger (rarely) although the authors readily admit that, strictly speaking, it is not a true badger.

The section on the natural history of the Eurasian badger is disappointing. Since the 1920s knowledge of this species has developed greatly, particularly over the past twenty years, so it is misleading to find quotations from statements (with references which are outdated) when these have been modified or corrected in more recent works. This lack of selection and appraisal of the literature reduces the value of this section. By contrast, the chapter on the population status of the badger gives a useful summary of its distribution in the number of European countries. The bibliography is comprehensive and the book is illustrated by many line-drawings, maps, photographs and monochrome photographs.

Wildest Britain: A Visitor's Guide to the National Parks by Roland Smith, with photographs by Mike Williams (224pp. Blackwell Press. £10.95. 0 7137 1270 8) has recently been published.

A master of the uproar

Patricia Craig

BARBARA HAYLEY
Carleton's Trails and Stories and the 19th Century Anglo-Irish Tradition
433pp. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe. £14.75.
086140 1182

William Carleton (1794-1869) received the greater part of his education in a hurn in Co Tyrone, and afterwards had a good deal to say on the subject of poor scholars and the standard means of social betterment available to them: recruitment to the priesthood. Carleton nearly followed this traditional course himself, before a pilgrimage to the spot known as St Patrick's Purgatory, in Lough Derg, Co Donegal, alerted him to all the defects and inadequacies of the religion he'd been brought up to profess. The shockiness, inanity and harshness of the Catholic Church were suddenly revealed to him.

His subsequent religious views made a favourable impression on the Revd Caesar Otway, editor of the anti-Catholic *Christian Examiner*, when the two men met in the late 1840s, and discovered a common repugnance for Catholicism and its associated hypocrisy, Otway inspired Carleton to set out in writing his recollections of the degrading pilgrimage, with particular reference to its enlightening effect on the mind of an observant young Catholic. "The Lough Derg Pilgrim" resulted.

This was Carleton's first published work, but it wasn't included among the *Trails and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* until the new edition of 1882, when it appeared with the bulk of its anti-Catholic observations intact. Barbara Hayley, who has noted and recorded every tiny textual alteration carried out by Carleton between 1830, when *Trails and Stories* (first series) was originally published in book form, and 1882, when the "definitive edition" came out, as well as tracking down every deletion and every addition to the stories, restores to Carleton the sole responsibility for certain extreme views expressed in his works. Earlier critics, such as W.B. Yeats and Alice Curzon, had preferred to attribute these to Otway's influence, or even to Otway himself, holding that no Catholic, not even a renegade, could turn on his hereditary church in such a heated way ("It is strange to reflect how many ordinances of the Roman religion are on the side of man's depravity. . . ."). Carleton wrote in "The Station", an early *Christian Examiner* piece included in the first series of *Trails and*

Stories). Actually, Carleton's opinions, like Otway's own, are the product of an impulse towards social criticism, rather than bigotry, which he deplored as much as anyone; the Catholic Church is by no means the only institution at the mercy of his considerable oratorical powers. No source of hardship or disaffection in the Irish countryside escapes his attention.

The scope for his invective was pretty wide. "Merciful God!" he wrote in his unfinished autobiography, "In what a frightful condition was the country at that time. I speak now of the North of Ireland. . . . The Orange Order fostered sectarianism and the abuse of power; the Ribbonmen (a secret agrarian society) retaliated by means of cattle-maiming and other traditional terrorist devices. Pressure to align oneself with one or other of these bodies was naturally extreme. . . . I have never entertained any ill-feeling against the people on either side; it is their accursed systems which I detest", Carleton declared with feeling, dissociating himself from the lot of them. His novel *Valentine M'Clutchy* stands as an indictment of Orangism; and he tackled the Ribbon movement in a similar spirit of antagonism in *Rody the Rover*.

Carleton's most spectacular achievement, indeed, was to convert peasant disabilities and discontents into the stuff of melodrama. His story "Tubber Derg" contains a worthy Catholic family whose fortunes are followed from prosperity to destitution and back again, and this vicissitude motif recurs in a number of his novels. Bad landlords and bad agents are to blame for the families' misfortunes, of course; Carleton, temporarily diverted from his strictures on Catholicism, designated them as "the two great curses of Ireland". Valentine M'Clutchy, in the novel of that name, is an agent of the most malevolent type (and an Orangeman to boot), and the novelist makes his origins as hideous as possible to underline the point: he's the bastard son of a gaoler's daughter and a lustful squire. The anti-Ribbon piece in *Trails and Stories*, "Wildgoose Lodge", with its fearful descriptions of burning and slaughter, has its roots in an actual historical event: in October, 1816, a midnight attack was carried out on the home of a man named Lynch who had fallen foul of the local Ribbon gang. Both parties were Catholic; Carleton is careful to distinguish between sectarian rampages and "faction fights" involving members of the same sect.

It was a time when the countryside was studied with gibbets, as Carleton recorded; mur-

der, evictions, beggary and starvation were other features of a particularly colourful period. In "The Poor Scholar" Carleton alludes to one desperate practice of the starving: the bleeding of bullocks and calves. This, in fact, was a customary resort: a celebrated work of 1792, the Revd Samuel Burdy's *Life of Skelton*, mentions the typical famine diet of boiled weeds and blood stolen from cows. Carleton's feelings about this matter occasionally erupted in ferociously satiric comment: "Abstinence from food is the national diversion", he says, in *The Squanders of Castle Squander*. His outrage, however, is more often expressed in conventionally dramatic terms. We have *The Black Prophet*, for example, a romance of destitution written during the great famine and referring back to a lesser one, which makes its point about the effects of hunger in a series of temperate evocations.

Carleton was without an exacting readership, as Yeats reminded us, and therefore under no compulsion to differentiate, in his fiction, between drama and melodrama. On the evidence of certain passages in his works it's possible to contend that his earliest literary models included the first historical novel to come out of Ulster, James McHenry's engagingly artless *O'Halloran: or, The Insurgent Chief* (1820), with its wild contrivances and startling diction; but Carleton's remarkable fluency, assurance and recklessness carried him far beyond such an elementary narrative technique as we find here. He is perhaps the most thoroughly rip-roaring of the nineteenth-century Irish novelists; characteristically, his stories proceed in an atmosphere of incessant animation and agitation. He gets the fullest theatrical effect from every incident he depicts. Extraordinary physical signals accompany the more heartfelt emotions of his characters. Veins bulge, lips froth and eyes blaze. At one point a defrocked cleric, in a passion, tears the hair from his head and flings it on a table ("The Lianian Shee").

The language of the tales is equally extravagant. Barbara Hayley's excellent study documents the way in which Carleton kept tinkering with *Trails and Stories*, struggling to arrive at an acceptable approximation to the type of dialect spoken by Co Tyrone peasants in the first half of the nineteenth century. The result is often pretty florid and tiresome. "No, in truth, Alick, wudn't they; but maybe if you war, the promise ye broke to Sally Mitchell might trouble ye a bit; at any rate, I've a prayer, an' if I only repented it wanst, I mightn't be leaved ay all the divils in hall." Carleton thickens his peasant voices almost to the point of impenetrability, and at the same time he runs the risk of making his more noble characters appear as buffoons: it is difficult to take seriously the activities of someone who constantly broadens "easy" to "aisy", adds an extra consonant to words like "order" ("ordher") and speaks obscenously of "gentlemen". These dialect peculiarities, in conjunction with the unremitting volubility of all the characters, are almost totally overwhelming.

continued on page 1416

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 113
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than December 30. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct — in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration. Entries, marked "Author, Author 113" on the envelopes, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on January 6.

- 1 A spiritually-minded person, with a fine show of collar-bone and a pretty taste in champagne; liked it dry you understand, and plenty of it.
- 2 I never saw so much champagne drunk so quickly. I found Richard and brought him in and we drank large quantities of a dangerous mixture by William which consisted chiefly of champagne, gin and absinthe.
- 3 And the small ripple split upon the beach
Scarcely o'pressed the cream of your champagne,
When over the him the sparkling bumpers reach,
That spring-ode of the spirit, the heart's rain!

INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

- Aldcroft, Derek, and Michael Freeman (Editors). *Transport in the Industrial Revolution* 1410
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The last sentence of John Sutherland's review of Geraldine Beare's *Index to the "Strand Magazine", 1891-1950*, TLS, December 9, was incompletely and incorrectly printed. It should have read: "The quantity of sheer painstaking labour that the 859 pages of this compilation represents is awesome, and the wonder is that any single cataloguer could have sustained himself through the task."

Competition No 149
Winner: Mrs E. Rossburgh
Answers:

- 1 I remember that my mother, during one of her rare visits to England, brought me a little jacket in acetate cloth from Schiaparelli. It seemed to me quite plain and uninteresting except for the label in its lining, and I longed to put this on the outside so that people would know where it came from.
Nancy Mitford, *Love in a Cold Climate*.
- 2 Let the old Muse loosen her stays
Origina me a new Muse with stockings and suppers
And a smile like a cat,
With false eyelashes and finger-nails of carmine
And dressed by Schiaparelli, with a pill-box hat.
Louisa MacNeice, "Autumn Journal", XV.
- 3 She shook back her shining hair. For this evening she had managed to borrow the Schiaparelli dress. It was made of tulle, with small side panniers, stuck out with cleverly curved pads over the hips. It was coloured dark blue, green, orange and white in a floral pattern as from the Pacific Islands.
Muriel Spark, *The Girls of Slender Means*.